

Lessons of
the Poindexter
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IN THESE TIMES

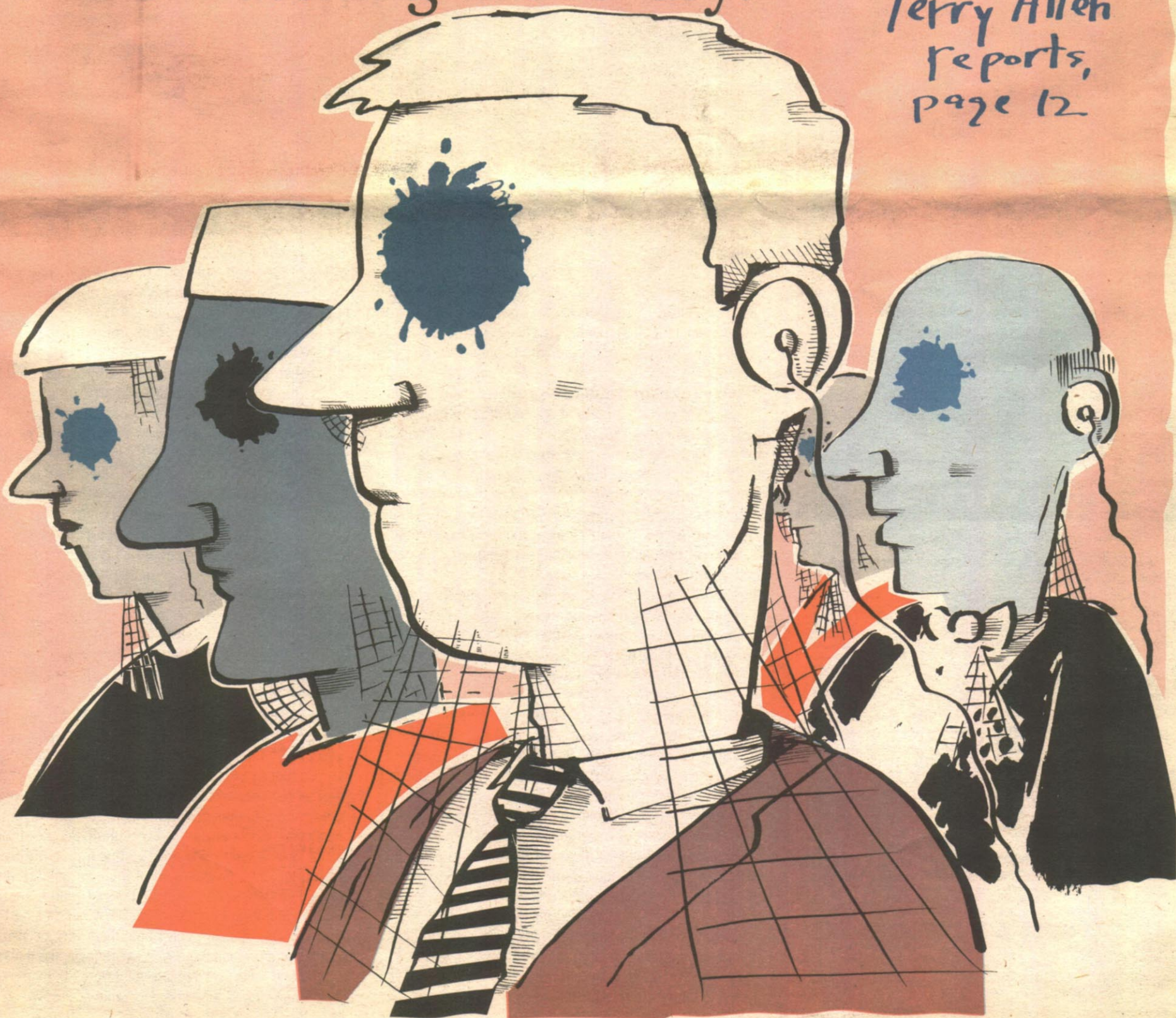
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THIS SPRING, FOR THE 46TH TIME, the United Nations Human Rights Commission deliberated for six weeks on the state of human rights in the world. Attending the session is like watching blood dry.

*Terry Allen
reports,
page 12*



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A homeless man in Times Square: homeless estimates range from 300,000 to 3 million.

A dark night for America's homeless

By Philip Gourevitch

Estimates on the nation's homeless population are hotly debated, ranging from 300,000 to 3 million, and the U.S. Census Bureau's recent effort to produce a more accurate number is bound to confuse the issue even further.

The census operation, termed "S-Night" for "street and shelter night," was a 12-hour nationwide "snapshot" count of the homeless. In 1980 there had been a similar effort, called "T-Night" for "transient night," but the numbers produced were so ridiculously small that the Census Bureau never published them. As it turned out, S-Night was every bit as botched an operation as T-Night, only on a much grander scale. But this time the bureau does not plan to bury its mistakes.

Census Bureau Director Barbara Bryant declared S-Night a "success" and confirmed the deepest fears of homeless advocates when she said, "I hope the numbers we got ... and the characteristics of the people we found will provide the program planners the information they need to solve the problem."

The following are only a few examples of Bryant's "success."

- In Ohio, two of four shelters in Fairfield County were not visited. In Clermont County, one shelter was missed. While census workers counted 83 people at a major shelter in Dayton, they refused to count the 43 people waiting for admission.

- In Rapid City, S.D., 163 adults and at least that many children who were being housed on an emergency basis in motels were not counted.

- In Kentucky, a 22-county area was counted by 23 enumerators, while another 23-county area had only six.

- At the St. Martin De Porres House of Good Hope in Chicago, census takers were unclear about how to fill out forms, so 68 children were listed as 68 single women.

- In Duluth, Minn., observers sat at 32 outdoor sites, and none of them was visited.

The list could go on.

The Census Bureau admitted from the start that an accurate count of the homeless would be impossible. Noting the absence of a generally accepted definition of homelessness, as well as the danger and difficulty of finding a population whose members' security is often a function of their ability to keep hidden or on the move, the bureau proposed instead to concentrate on "selected components of the homeless population ... in pre-identified sites." In other words, they guaranteed an undercount.

The *Census Reports*, which presents an elaborately cross-referenced demographic index of the nation's population broken down to areas as specific as a city block, is the basis for the annual allocation of billions of dollars in federal funds. S-Night figures, then, will determine not only public perception of the scale of homelessness but also the priority given to homelessness on the national agenda over the coming decade. The bureau has, however, promised to publish S-Night figures in tandem with an announcement explaining that the count represents...well...only those people who happened to be counted.

Recipe for confusion: Last year the Census Bureau asked local officials of 39,000 communities to provide lists of all shelters, outdoor sites and abandoned buildings where homeless people were known to congregate. Then on the night of March 20-21, an army of 15,000 enumerators, each of whom had received a two-hour training course the night before, were sent out in teams of two or three to all sites except the ones where their safety was deemed questionable. The enumeration occurred in three phases: from 6 p.m. to midnight in the shelters, from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. on the streets and from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. at abandoned buildings.

Enumerators were told to attempt to interview all subjects, to ask them their age, sex and race. If a person was asleep or "not in a state of mind to answer the questions," enumerators were told to estimate these data, or, if that was impossible, simply to record that a person had been counted. Enumerators were not to count anyone who was not at a pre-identified site, and they were not to enter abandoned buildings but to stand outside and count anyone who came or went.

In every aspect, this plan was a recipe for confusion and error. It was not clear, for example, which sorts of shelters qualified for inclusion in the bureau's plan. Shelters for victims of domestic violence, transitional housing programs and welfare motels and hotels fell into a gray area. Some were listed and some were not. There was also the problem that local officials are rarely the best informed about the location of the homeless, and in some areas they prefer to deny homelessness altogether. Even in those areas where officials did provide extensive site

lists, the bureau rarely covered them all. In New York City, the mayor's office identified 2,100 sites, but only 1,500 made it onto the final S-Night plan.

Although Census Bureau officials claim the shelter phase would likely be the most accurate, it was also the most unnecessary. All shelters maintain administrative records, and in most cases they compile quarterly or annual tables of shelter occupancy rates. In light of this, the shelter count could have been performed—more precisely, at less expense and at less inconvenience to shelter residents—by mail or phone.

Confounding variables: As for the street phase of S-Night, the prospect of accuracy was never more than a fantasy. "There are simply too many confounding variables," said Sue Watlov Phillips of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. Because the bureau would count only at pre-identified sites, a number of homeless were blatantly overlooked. George McDonald of New York's not-for-profit Doe Fund reported standing on the corner of 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue and seeing two census enumerators walk past seven people sleeping outside St. Thomas Church without counting them. The church was not a designated site. "That told me all I ever needed to know about this census," McDonald said.

Another variable not taken into account by S-Night methodology was the weather. In New York it was cold and raining, in Vermont it snowed and in Louisiana the mercury dipped into the 30s. Census officials said the bad weather would increase the count by driving people into the shelters. But in New Orleans, there are only 640 shelter beds for an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 homeless, and while the cold drove people off the streets, most wound up in hiding places that did not appear on any census

INSIDE STORY

lists.

Even where the weather was fair, the idea of interviewing homeless people in the middle of the night was, in the words of Bill Faith, chairman of the Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, "working at odds with the motivation of most homeless people." This problem was only exacerbated by the bureau's abject failure to inform the homeless about S-Night before the fact. Here and there, posters or fliers did appear and advocates and providers attempted to spread the word, but, as Diane Doherty, director of the Homeless and AIDS Project at Georgetown University, observed on the eve of the count, "As far as the homeless go, this census is the best-kept secret."

In the end, the only aspect of S-Night that appears to have gone as planned was the work of independent research teams the bureau hired to monitor the event in five cities. But while preliminary reports from these studies indicate that only about 55 percent of the homeless at S-Night sites were counted, the bureau has plans to develop a corrective model to adjust their figures accordingly. Whatever the evidence, the bureau has said it has no intentions of admitting the gross inaccuracy of the count. Instead, the data collected by the monitoring teams is strictly for research purposes, to indicate how the job might be done better in the future.

Nonetheless, Census Bureau officials like to remind critics that their report traffics only in hard numbers—each unit an actual person, no estimates. But the idea of calling the product of S-Night's flabby methodology "hard numbers" is patently absurd. After all, as Michael Marubio, director of the Illinois Coalition for the Homeless, put it: "Homelessness is not a fixed condition. People slip in and out of it. It is simply the poor getting a little bit poorer."

Around 1 a.m. on the night of the count, police shooed a homeless woman out of New York's Grand Central Station as enumerators tried to interview her. "I ain't talking to no census," she said. "Last time there was a census, I got counted and nothing happened." With logic like that, it's a wonder she wasn't working for the Census Bureau.

Philip Gourevitch is a New York-based freelance writer.

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This is first in an occasional series of reports on workplace health and safety issues entitled "Danger: People at Work."

By David Moberg

EVERY YEAR MORE THAN 200,000 WORKERS in U.S. smelters, battery plants and metal-working factories are exposed to dangerously high levels of cadmium. And for each year that the federal government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) delays setting tougher new limits on permissible cadmium exposure, as many as 250 more workers die of cancer, according to OSHA's own director of health standards. Another 7,500 may develop serious kidney illnesses.

For nearly three years, attorney David C. Vladeck of the Public Citizen Litigation Group has tried on behalf of the International Chemical Workers Union to get federal courts to force OSHA to promulgate new cadmium-exposure standards. Vladeck also has tried to garner the interest of the press, but so far he's had no success on either count.

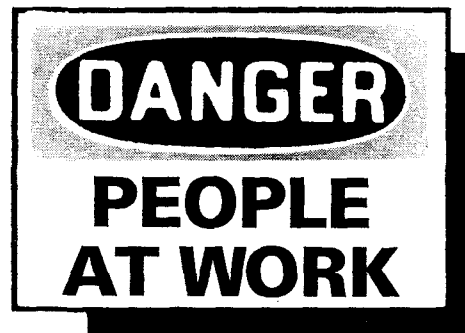
Lack of coverage of the dangers of cadmium may be one reason many factory workers are needlessly dying. Last year the press jumped on the story that Alar, a chemical used on apples, was a carcinogen that endangered children, who typically drink a lot of apple juice. The same press furor helped force Alar off the market. But while Alar poses serious health risks, cadmium is about 1,000 times more toxic given the likely magnitude of exposure, says Vladeck.

With the initiation last year of an annual Workers Memorial Day (observed this April 28), unions hoped to make the public and press more aware of the dangers workers face on the job. Yet two decades after the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the dangers to health and life in America's workplaces remain severely underreported. Over the years critics have reproached the press for missing similar stories about the dangers of asbestos, video-display terminals, cumulative-trauma disorders and many more hazards that exist in the newspaper or station's backyard—even in its own newsrooms. Sometimes it's the reporters' fault, but often editors and publishers are to blame. *New York Times* reporter Richard Severo is 'convinced he was punitively transferred because of a hard-hitting series he did in 1980 on the abuses of genetic screening of workers by chemical companies like DuPont.

No news is dangerous news: Academic researchers have repeatedly shown that press coverage of a "danger" is disproportionate to the amount of risk posed by that danger. A team headed by Rutgers University professor of public health Michael Greenberg concluded that if coverage were proportionate to risk, during the study period the major networks would have aired about 360 times more coverage of just three well-known environmental risks than of airplane accidents. Instead, the airplane accidents received eight times the coverage of the environmental risks.

If environmental risks get short shrift, the workplace suffers even more. Peter Sandman, a member of the study team and director of Rutgers' Environmental Communication Research Program, reports from their survey of network news that "an occupational death is roughly one-tenth as newsworthy as an environmental death."

Oversight of workplace hazards



Environmental coverage has improved somewhat during the past two decades, thanks to pressure put on by environmentalists. But workplace health and safety reporting generally declined in the early '80s, just as Reagan's deregulation, the spread of new technologies and intensified economic pressures combined to reverse progress being made toward a safer workplace.

Why is workplace safety a journalistic orphan? The cadmium story illustrates some of the problems. Vladeck, like other workplace-safety advocates, finds that virtually no major press institutions have a reporter regularly assigned to OSHA or occupational health. Yet each year more than 70,000 Americans die of work-related accidents and illnesses. It is more likely that the average U.S. worker will be seriously injured on the job than it is that someone who smokes two packs of cigarettes a day will get cancer.

Workplace stories often fall into the cracks between labor, health and environment stories. Without training or regular experience, many reporters find occupational-safety issues bewilderingly technical and lack an adequate conceptual framework for understanding, let alone explaining, the stories. More important, nearly all major press institutions have dramatically downplayed or even eliminated their regular labor beats—if they ever had them—making a bad situation worse.

Tell us how you feel: Reporters want victims of workplace hazards, like the wheezing miner with the black lung or the grieving widow, to personalize their stories. But, argues United Automobile Workers Health and Safety Director Frank Mirer, "the unnamed victims are more important than the ones you can name." Although the carnage from a poison like cadmium is real, any actual cancer death may have had multiple causes and probably appeared only after many years on the job. In addition, workplace-safety reporting emphasizes the big tragedies—the mine disaster or construction collapse—and not the more deadly chronic problems such as exposure to cadmium or low-level radiation or the absence of protective devices on machinery.

More generally, the press has, especially in recent years, tended to exclude the voices of average working people and to exhibit antipathy toward labor unions. Last year people questioned in a Roper poll ranked workplace safety as the second most important environmental issue. In another survey by Sirota, Alper & Pfau, full-time workers ranked safe working conditions—not more pay—as their primary goal. This suggests readers and viewers would be interested in more workplace-health reporting. But, notes Sandman, "most occupational risks are blue-

collar, and the audiences most attractive to advertisers are not. So, when talking about occupational risks, you're talking about 'them' and not 'us.' There's a class risk. If most risks were professional level, they'd get more coverage."

Sheldon Samuels, occupational safety director at the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department, flatly argues that the main impediment to better workplace-safety reporting is "the prejudice of the reporter ... against anything that makes unions look good." For example, Eleanor Kennelly, who worked at the AFL-CIO on food-industry safety issues, recounted how a TV reporter in a Midwest meatpacking town rationalized ignoring a major workplace-safety story in his backyard: "It was just the union talking. Why should I believe them? They're prejudiced."

Journalistic anti-union bias is especially tragic, because the single most important determinant of relative workplace safety is the presence of a strong union, says Joseph

"If more [workplace] risks were professional level, they'd get more coverage."

Kinney, executive director of the National Safe Workplace Institute (NSWI). Workplace victims, says Kinney, tend to be African-American, Hispanic or ethnic white males under 40—"the forgotten and expendable Americans."

Unblissful ignorance: Chemical hazards become newsworthy only when they affect the wider public. Reports on environmental threats such as Alar, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) or dioxins emitted at waste sites like Love Canal rarely discuss the exposure of factory workers to these products. Grain workers who suffered and died from serious neurological damage as a result of exposure to ethylene dibromide were ignored until a 1983 congressional hearing

proved the substance had been found in flour. The chemical then made headlines and was banned, but by the Environmental Protection Administration and not by OSHA. According to Hunter College professor David Kotelchuck, the press didn't pick up stories about the dangers of asbestos when it appeared that only workers were affected but waited until there was evidence that the general public was threatened as well. And despite United Farmworker Union efforts to link its members' fates with those of consumers, there is still far more coverage of pesticide traces on food than of the much more deadly exposures to the same pesticides by farmers and farmworkers.

There is a hidden double standard at the heart of missing workplace coverage: workplace dangers are thought to be an unavoidable part of a job; necessary for public good or "progress," voluntarily accepted by workers or compensated by a paycheck. But workers frequently don't realize the risks they face and accept their conditions in part out of limited choice and economic coercion. Many of the most hazardous jobs are poorly paid, says the NWSI's Kinney, and workers' compensation usually leaves victims impoverished.

Occupational safety and health also are underreported because reporters—like much of the public—don't understand how avoidable many accidents and illnesses are. Rarely do reporters give readers a framework for understanding the cause of a construction worker's death from a fall: it may seem just a tragic "accident" or even an example of worker carelessness.

But while construction is one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S.—in large part due to scaffold falls—according to Kinney, Japan has had virtually no construction deaths or serious injuries for many years. The difference: Japanese construction firms use horizontal and vertical steel nets around all scaffolding. Even within the U.S., there were about one-fourth as many construction deaths in Los Angeles as there were in New York in the early '80s (even though Los Angeles issued nearly six times as many building permits), mainly because California more vigorously enforced safety.

Human error may be inevitable, even if reduced by improved training, but the question too often unasked is: how can workplaces be designed to avoid the serious consequences of mistakes? When workplace deaths are seen not as inevitable but as consequences of public and private policy choices, they become more newsworthy.

Workplace-safety stories are often skewed by reporters' methods, sources and personal views. Increasingly reporters come from and live within a middle-class, well-educated social milieu and rarely encounter the people who suffer the most from workplace dangers. Workers themselves are often afraid to blow the whistle on workplace hazards unless they are relatively immune to the dangers of losing their jobs: 96 percent of workers who file OSHA complaints are subsequently fired. Few reporters attempt to breach corporate walls to personally view the conditions under which most people work. If in-

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By Joel Bleifuss

A good read

Spy magazine's Susan Lehman recently asked librarians at the Library of Congress to list the favorite books of our representatives in Washington. Lehman reports that when "the leaders of the nation ... dip into the world's largest library" they are most likely to request *Daddy* by Danielle Steele, any Judith Krantz novel and *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand (the book most often on the waiting list), among others. One of those others is a work of non-fiction that you can be glad has caught the congressional eye. It's *Inside Job—The Looting of America's Savings and Loans* by Stephen Pizzo, Mary Fricker and Paul Muolo. The introduction of this 400-plus page examination of the savings and loan scandal that was released last year reads, in part: "On Oct. 15, 1982, President Ronald Reagan invited 200 savings and loan [S&L] executives, bankers, Congressmen and journalists to witness the signing of one of his administration's major pieces of deregulation legislation, the Garn-St. Germain Act of 1982—[a bill that] would cut savings and loans loose from the tight girdle of old-fashioned, restrictive federal regulations. [This bill is] the most important legislation for financial institutions in 50 years," Reagan said, beaming. "All in all, I think we've hit the jackpot." The ink wasn't dry on the Garn-St. Germain legislation before high-stakes investors, swindlers and mobsters lined up to loot S&Ls. They immediately seized the opportunity created by careless deregulation of thrifts and gambled, stole and embezzled away billions in an orgy of greed and excess. The result was the biggest financial disaster since the Great Depression and the biggest heist in history. Tens of billions of dollars were siphoned out of federally insured institutions. Everyone in Washington and the thrift industry—except President Reagan, who went eight years without mentioning the problem—haggled over just how many billions might be missing. [The most recent estimates of the taxpayer's bill for bailing out these failed thrifts now stands at \$500 billion—or \$2,000 for each of the 250 million men, women and children in the U.S.] The meltdown of the S&L industry was a story of failure—failure of politicians, failure of regulators, failure of the Justice Department and failure of the federal courts. Billions of dollars drifted off into the ozone, never to be seen again. Of the missing money, as much as half had been stolen outright. Yet few of the hit-and-run artists who infiltrated the thrift industry went to jail and little of the money was recovered."

One simple question

"When are the crooks going to jail?" is one question Rep. Frank Annunzio (D-IL) put to Attorney General Richard Thornburgh in a letter sent last January 4. In the missive, Annunzio, chair of the Financial Institutions Supervision, Regulation and Insurance Subcommittee, deplored the Bush administration's failure to prosecute and imprison those involved in the S&L scandal—particularly since the thrift bailout legislation signed by President Bush last August 9 had increased the civil and criminal penalties for fraud involving financial institutions. "There appears to be very little in the way of criminal-enforcement actions against wrongdoers," Annunzio wrote. He asked the U.S. attorney general to provide his committee with a report on the resources the Justice Department had allocated to investigate and prosecute S&L fraud, including: a detailed breakdown of the number of personnel and the financial resources devoted to the task; the number of grand juries empaneled; the number of indictments handed down; and a list of case results—verdicts, pleas entered, sentences imposed and fines collected. It has been more than three months, and Annunzio has yet to get a response from the attorney general. The one thing the committee has discovered is that the Justice Department is planning to spend only \$50 million of the \$75 million allocated in last year's bailout bill for investigation and prosecution.

Fraud haven?

One place where S&L fraud does not appear to be vigorously prosecuted is Houston, Texas. Pete Brewton reports in the *Houston Post* that no financial officers of failed S&Ls in Houston have been convicted and only one has been indicted. Further, in the whole southern Texas district, which includes Houston, only 95 people have been indicted for bank-related fraud, and only one financial officer has been convicted. In contrast, 250 people have been indicted in Dallas, including more than 12 S&L officers. The U.S. attorney responsible for investigating and prosecuting S&L fraud in Houston and southern Texas is Henry Oncken. On April 12, Oncken testified in Dallas before the House banking commit-



Hand extended, Shivaun works the sidewalk in front of Walgreens.

Shivaun: street-side fundraiser

By Julia Gilden

A woman stands every night on a corner where the seedy Tenderloin merges into San Francisco's posh theater district. She wears a pale gray tweed overcoat, black slacks and running shoes. Her shoulder-length brown hair, parted in the middle, sweeps off her forehead in waves. She almost looks as if she might have been managing a business or running an office an hour ago. Yet on closer inspection, her face is haggard, slightly off balance. In a quiet voice, the woman who calls herself Shivaun asks a passerby for spare change. This is her story.

"I'm not apologizing for the way I live," she says. "I'd rather be panhandling than having to explain my problems all the time to welfare workers and my family." She's referring to her lack of home and job, not her crack habit.

While many women in their late 40s are slimming down with aerobics, a few, like Shivaun, get their exercise walking the streets for survival. Her philosophical discussions take the form of explaining to passing suburbanites in town for a culture fix how she ran out of money and family, and how her solid middle-class American lifestyle fell off the truck.

Shivaun's notions of how to patch the cracks in her universe seem fragmented. Money is frequently lost. Casual brushes with death heighten the drama.

Streetbound: Wrapped in the gray coat, a freebie from somewhere, Shivaun blends in with the concrete and neon urbanscape. The left side of her face is slack, the unfortunate legacy of the surgical removal of a small tumor behind her ear several years ago. Her gaze shifts, first focused and then distracted. But when she walks, it is with purpose, shoulders back, coat flapping in the breeze she makes.

It is more the walk of a school director, a real-estate agent or a successful business entrepreneur—all positions that she held when she was married and raising four children.

Like many others, Shivaun staged her own revo-

lution in the '60s, leaving a comfortable marriage to follow her heart. She recalls a decade and a half of passion, creative brainstorming, successful business ventures and a spirit guide who communicated with her through a Ouija board. She spent these years in Santa Cruz, Calif., with her second husband, with whom she had a fifth child, Damien, now a young man of 18. That period ended when her husband left her for another woman.

"We smoked marijuana daily for 15 years. We'd get high and get creative ideas, and then we'd do them. When Damien was 14 we all smoked together. We found out that he had been sneaking behind our backs, and we thought it would be better out front. Things changed after that," she says lightly. "I wasn't his mom anymore. We were friends."

"Now," says Damien's father, "we only see her when she needs money. She can't manage on her own. I have to hold her SSI [Social Security Supplemental Income] check and dole it out to her in small pieces or else she'd spend it on drugs or give it to some cowboy on the street." Fair or not, he sneers at her down-and-out lovers.

People who know Shivaun say she has burned everyone for money, borrowed and lied to feed her drug habit. She says she lost the will to be responsible when her marriage ended. They expect her to die on the streets from a drug overdose or random violence, but she insists she is slowly taking control of her life.

In three years she has slipped from unemployed person to transient to crack user, three steps which she sees as unconnected but which explain her life to those who know her. She doesn't foresee her spiral downward leading to anonymous death in the streets. She views herself as a member of a legitimate if unrecognized sector of society whose main crime is social disenfranchisement.

"The way I live may not look right to you, but in many ways it's more honest than supposedly acceptable lifestyles. Besides, I'm never bored," she says.

"My transactions are immediate—if someone can't be trusted, I know it right away. If someone wants something, usually drugs or money, there is no hidden agenda. Everything is on the table."

Shivaun says she realizes, like others before her have, that as far as society is concerned, "If you aren't in the middle class, either you're a failure or you're sick." As an official dropout on her way to contributing to the homeless mortality rate, she has adopted a new way of measuring success.

After several harrowing drug-induced medical emergencies, Shivaun now lives in a small room in a barren hotel where friends must pay \$10 to visit residents and no overnight stays are allowed. She finds soup lines demeaning but has sampled the cuisine of most of San Francisco's downtown charitable establishments. She makes her dinner arrangements according to the size of the serving spoon and the quality of the food. Panhandling often nets exotic meals in doggie bags. Sometimes other gifts appear, like boots or sweaters.

"I work hard at being pleasant," she says. "I have to find new spots to stand where people aren't sick of me. The theater crowd is the worst. I got \$20 one night from one woman, but she stopped and talked to me until I was in tears."

Is she describing an odyssey or a cheap hustle?

"I see panhandling as direct-appeal fundraising," she says. "People give to United Way as their tax-deductible act of charity, and look at where that money goes. Most of it goes to the care and feeding of United Way. When you give people on the street money, it goes right to those who need it."

Chasing the dollar: Shivaun believes people will do anything for money in this culture—in fact, for most that is their only quest. "What difference does it make what people spend it on? The whole point of this culture is getting people to give you their money. What we're about is denial—denying that what we're really addicted to is spending, or denying that drugs create violent people. When I have money, I see a thousand things I want. Why is it OK to always want more and to never feel that you have enough? Why is it OK to get drunk and not OK to get stoned?"

"I have the opinion that a lot of people are addicted to Walgreens," she says, her head cocked, her chin high, as she stands in her self-assigned spot under the red lights of the all-night drug store. "I see people go in and out of here 17 times a night."

For Shivaun, another proof that money rules all behavior is her newfound fear of possessions and the responsibility that having things engenders. Wanting less is antithetical to society's values. It gives her lifestyle a rebel status. The people she admires are those who give what they have away, like the well-dressed man who emptied his pockets into her hands, explaining that he was dying of AIDS.

But street living doesn't eliminate the money loop. "While I am working, I chant now—a Buddhist chant under my breath—for more money," she says. "I don't want to end up as a bag lady pushing a grocery cart."

She remembers growing up in St. Louis in a poor but ambitious family that punished her for associating with blacks or Catholics. "Now I'm Catholic and 85 percent of my friends are black," she says.

Her family in St. Louis knows nothing of her current life. Though they could afford to help her, she would never turn to them. Nor will she now contact her grown children from her first marriage. "My kids won't have anything to do with me. They feel like I've burned them," she says. In any case, one of the dictums of street life is an unspoken agreement not to burden respectable family members with unseemly needs. "It would embarrass them," she says. "They would be shocked and disappointed."

"This life happened by degrees," she says. "When I moved to the Tenderloin, I was afraid to walk on

the streets. Little by little I started going out. I saw that nearly everybody in the neighborhood is into drugs. I bought a rock [of crack] the other night from an Asian woman with two children. But I never buy from kids, even though they are selling. I used to have a two-gram-a-day coke habit; now I just freebase [smoke crack].

"I could bounce back to the other world, but most people I know from my previous life have sold their souls by telling small lies in order to manipulate people and situations. Drugs may be an escape, because they change your perspective. They make you vulnerable, generous and compassionate, more susceptible to peoples' stories." And, she admits, more susceptible to being ripped off by less-scrupulous addicts.

Crack's in her life: Bereft of a demanding career or lifestyle, Shivaun says she turns to drugs out of pure boredom. "I like the intrigue, the sport, the drama to obtain it. A \$10 shot of crack is the size of a marble. I go to my room, take my shoes off, split my rock in two, put it in my pipe and listen for the sizzle so I know it's good. Then I inhale—I love the taste—I blow the smoke out and get a rush that lasts three to five minutes. Then I chill out and do the other half. Then I go back out on the street and start again."

"I'm not an addict. I choose to get high," says Shivaun. "A few years ago I had a cocaine habit. I nearly died from circulatory problems. But now I freebase—it's much safer than shooting."

Last year, her son Damien, then 17, nearly died from a cocaine overdose. He went into convulsions and his heart stopped. This frightened his mother, who was with him at the time. She saved his life. Together they swore off drugs—a pact that lasted a few weeks.

Damien is a handsome, strapping youth who is full of enterprising ideas and has already learned that street economics are as demanding as any straight job—and that one blends into the other, making life a giddy arena of possibilities.

These days he says, "I hate my mom. I hope she drops dead. I never want to see her again. She's not my mom." Although he is as much involved in the drug culture as he was a year ago, he insists that it is his mother, not he, who has a drug problem. She says she can't help him, that he comes to visit her only when he wants to get high. She sees him rarely now. She heard last month that he had a second round of drug-induced convulsions.

"My family and friends all love me at the first of the month, when I have money or drugs, or both," she says. "They don't want to see me at the end of the month because they can't get anything from me."

People who know her well insist that Shivaun doesn't deserve another chance, that she's had more opportunities than most, that she will do anything to fuel her addiction.

She resents offers of help and maintains therapy is useless. "As I progress more and more into this life, I can explain less and less," she says. "What they don't realize is I'm a free spirit. I like what I'm doing."

She expects to be working again, someday. "I'm not actively looking," she says. "I don't look like the kind of person people would want to hire." Still, she is considering putting up a sign in Walgreens to advertise for housework.

Shivaun invented her name and her son's for this story. A momentary critic of her shattered dreams, she says, "I feel like I have stepped out of real life and have become fiction." □

Editor's note: As *In These Times* went to press, Damien had a third cocaine-induced seizure. He lies in a coma, near death.

Julia Gilden is on her way to the *Imperial Valley Press* in El Centro, Calif., where she will write about life on the U.S.-Mexico border.

tee, saying, "In many of the allegations, there seems to be a lack of proof that the insiders personally profited from the regulatory violation or criminal infractions reported." He blamed his failure to prosecute S&L fraud on the shortage of attorneys in his office, the FBI's failure to complete investigations and an inadequate number of federal judges to handle the cases in his district. Judges in Houston do appear to be overloaded with work. Brewton reports that some federal judges in Houston have criticized Oncken "for clogging the system by filing a large number of small drug cases."

It's a crisis

The chair of the House banking committee is Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D-TX). (Gonzalez, you remember, is the one congressman who had the temerity to suggest that Congress consider bringing articles of impeachment against President Ronald Reagan for his role in the Iran/contra scandal.) During the above-mentioned Dallas hearings, Gonzalez said, "We know we have a savings and loan crisis, and we are about to have another crisis—a crisis in the confidence of the American public in the ability of the federal government to deal with the problem. The American people—judging from my mail and telephone calls—are angry about what they see as a 'business as usual' approach to a disaster that is going to cost them dearly. ... Despite headlines of ever-increasing bad news about the depth of the damage, we have not seen from the administration a sense of urgency in keeping with the magnitude of the crisis." Gonzalez announced that on May 22-23 his committee will hold hearings to examine the failure of Silverado Savings—the Denver thrift on which President Bush's son Neil served as a member of the board of directors (see "In Short," March 14).

Darker crimes?

Pizzo, Fricker and Muolo, the above-mentioned authors of *Inside Job—The Looting of America's Savings and Loans*, wrap up their chronicle by pointing to one of the scandal's most sinister aspects, alleged CIA involvement in the S&L debacle. They write, in part, "Of course, the mob and the swindlers didn't suck all the billions out of the thrift industry. ... Something else was going on at thrifts too. We avoided dealing with it in detail because we never seemed to be able to get our arms around it, but it disturbed us and bears mention. Time and again during our research we ran into people at failed thrifts who claimed to have connections with the CIA. We ran into individuals whom we discovered were dealing secretly with the contras, moving large sums of money, here, there and off to nowhere for what they claimed were covert purposes. [The authors list examples.] We don't know what all that means, but we want to be on the record as saying that we finally came to believe something involving the CIA and the contras was going on at thrifts during the '80s. Taking out loans from federally insured institutions, giving the money to the contras, and letting federal insurance pick up the losses does have the flavor of what Ollie North might think was a 'neat idea.'"

Intelligence update

Was the CIA looting the country's S&Ls? That question is being investigated by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. The committee is looking into allegations first raised by the *Houston Post's* Pete Brewton that the Mafia and the CIA were involved in the failure of 25 federally insured financial institutions, the bailout of which will cost the U.S. taxpayer about \$14 billion (see "In Short," February 21 and 28, March 14). Dan Childs, intelligence committee staff director and a former CIA official (see story, page 8), told *In These Times*, "We have a preliminary investigation underway. We had hoped to be in a position by the end of this month to decide where we will go from here. But the committee's [two] investigators have not yet talked to everyone they wanted to." Rep. Anthony Beilenson (R-CA), the chairman of the intelligence committee, responded to *In These Times* inquiries by issuing this statement: "The committee is investigating and taking it very seriously. As soon as the investigation is complete we will be issuing a public statement." The intelligence committee investigators have yet to question either CIA Director William Webster or FBI Director William Sessions. They did, however, interview Lloyd Monroe, a former Justice Department attorney who, during his investigation of failed financial institutions, found evidence of CIA involvement and government cover-up. Next week's issue of *In These Times* will feature Monroe's assessment of the S&L scandal and why the Justice Department, Congress and the media continue to ignore the severity—and the long-term consequences—of the crisis.

Social and scholarly

The American media is portraying Eastern Europe's restructuring as a transformation from a state centralist political economy to a free market, according to R. L. "Banjo" Norman and Bogdan Denitch, organizers of the Eighth Annual Socialist Scholars Conference. But what's more important, they say, is the confrontation between narrow nationalist aims and larger international capitalist aims. A record 3,000 people attended this year's conference, which presented the best-informed assemblage yet of speakers on Eastern European matters, says Norman. The rolling back of women's rights in the midst of Eastern Europe's democratic upheaval—an issue largely ignored by the media—was also discussed by Yugoslav author Slavenka Draculic. Other featured speakers included Salvadoran FMLN leader Ruben Zamora, feminist author Barbara Ehrenreich and *Nation* European correspondent Daniel Singer.

Running on hemp

In Kentucky, Gatewood Galbraith is running for governor on a platform of legalizing the cultivation and sale of marijuana. By doing so he hopes to show that there is a vast and influential voting bloc of marijuana smokers, past and present, in the state. Like Zolton Ferency in Michigan (see *In These Times*, April 11-17), Galbraith proposes taxing the production and use of marijuana just as alcohol and cigarettes are taxed, as reported in a recent *Chicago Tribune* story by Paul Weingarten. Federal drug-enforcement authorities rank Kentucky in the top five marijuana-producing states. Galbraith figures that the substantial numbers of users, producers and distributors will form a base of 250,000 votes, enough to win the primary. The 43-year-old lawyer has set up a national toll-free campaign hotline, 1-800-866-HEMP, and is distributing rolling papers that explain how his \$1,000-a-pound tax would generate at least \$700 million in revenues that he would spend on education and other social needs.

First real crack?

Finally, a few prominent Democrats are proposing serious cuts in military spending and the use of the "peace dividend" for social needs. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) has proposed cutting the \$300 billion military budget by 7 percent in the next fiscal year and by 5 percent more each year through 1995, according to the *New York Times*. And Sen. Alan Cranston (D-CA) proposes cumulative cuts of \$375 billion through 1997. In a sharp break with the Bush administration and with Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, Kennedy and Cranston argue that the money cut from the Pentagon should be used for education, medical care and other social needs and not merely be set aside to reduce the deficit. The deficit was caused by Reagan and Bush's policies of cutting taxes and massive military spending and should be left to Republicans to resolve, Kennedy suggests, while the Democrats should now re-establish their claim as the party that meets popular needs.

Where was George?

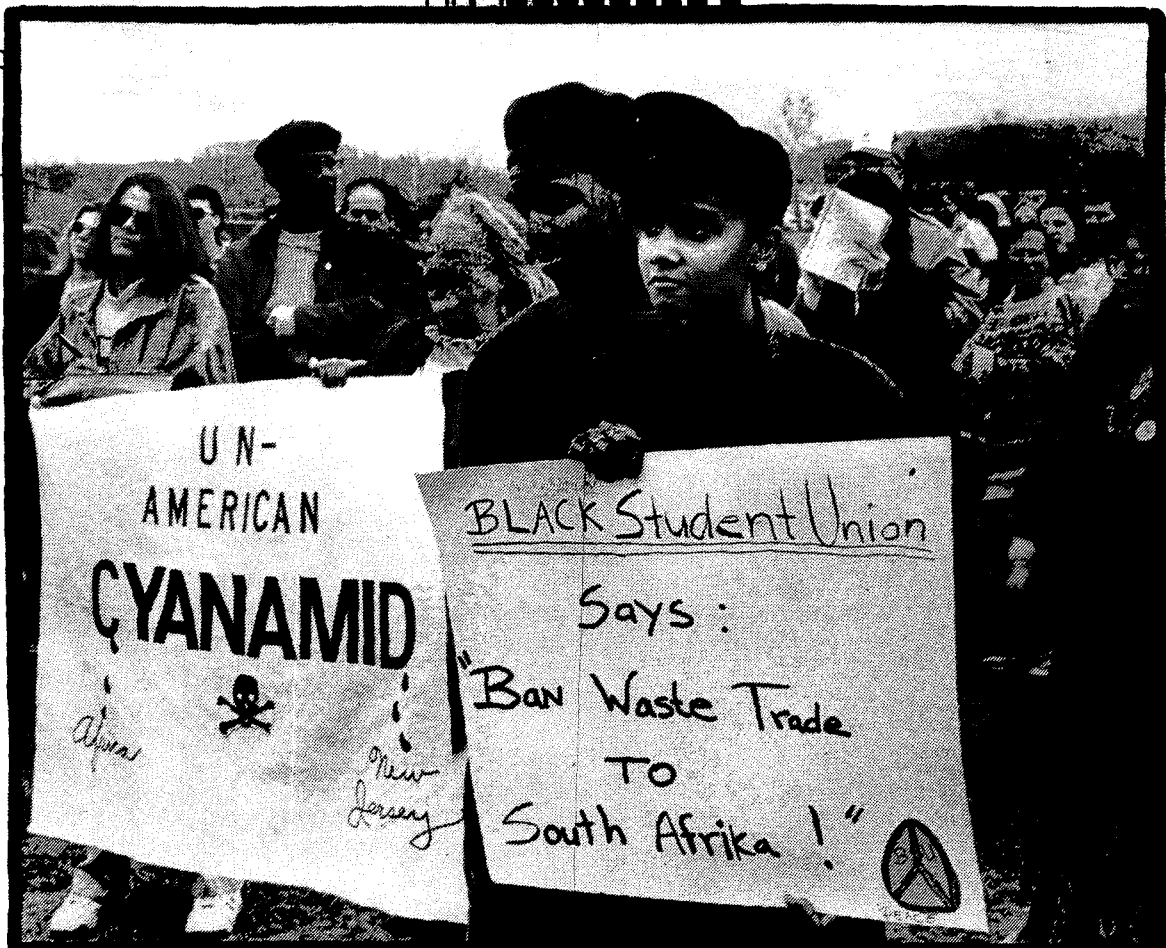
The largest number of arrests ever in front of the White House was made during a March 24 protest commemorating the death of Salvadoran Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero and calling for an end to all U.S. wars in Central America. Of the estimated 25,000 who attended the march, 639 built and sat in shelters in the middle of the street facing the White House and were carried away by police, according to Ann Morrisett Davidson, who attended the protest. The day-long event—which included speakers Jesse Jackson, Ed Asner, Raul Julia and Pete Seeger—was virtually ignored by the news media. According to the Committee In Solidarity With the People of El Salvador, most of those arrested paid \$50 bonds and were released the same night.

The funding on the wall

For the first time, *Common Cause* magazine is releasing detailed lists itemizing every political action committee (PAC) contribution received by each current member of Congress from 1983 to 1988. The lists, categorized by interest group, show that the members were given a total of nearly \$300 million in special-interest contributions during the six-year period. Of that, House members received \$194 million and senators \$97 million.

Please send timely news about local activities, follow-ups on stories we've run or other interesting bits of information—including your address and phone number—to Kira Jones, *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

IN SHORT



Demonstrators rally against the export of toxic mercury waste to South Africa at the American Cyanamid Co.'s Bound Brook, N.J., export plant in mid-April. Runoff from the waste, which is processed at Thor Chemicals' reprocessing facility in South Africa's KwaZulu "homeland," has contaminated the nearby Mngewu and Umgeni rivers. Greenpeace has recorded mercury levels in the Mngewu at 8,800 times what the U.S. considers hazardous. The rivers are regularly used as water sources by Zulu villagers in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. Similar protests are being carried out by environmentalists, apartheid opponents and trade unionists at Cyanamid and Thor facilities across the globe.

Flag burner in paradise

Gregory "Joey" Johnson, who ignited the flag-desecration issue with his scorching of the Stars and Stripes and subsequent Supreme Court triumph, is currently on the lucrative lecture circuit, sparking controversy from Hawaii to the West Coast. Johnson calls the burning of Old Glory "a 1,000 points of light."

During his Honolulu visit earlier this month, Revolution Books—which, like Johnson, is linked to the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP)—was vandalized and the heavily guarded flag burner was threatened by skinheads. Ever defiant, Johnson appeared publicly and underground, draped in a Palestinian shawl and torching flags as he denounced U.S. imperialism and censorship and defended rap music and the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe against the likes of North Carolina's ultraconservative Republican Sen. Jesse Helms.

When it comes to former Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, however, the protester, who made constitutional history with the Supreme Court ruling that desecration of the flag is protected by free-speech guarantees, is no great defender of the First Amendment.

The self-described Maoist told a ragtag band of the party faithful at a Honolulu mall that he did not oppose the outlawing of the works of Beethoven and Shakespeare during China's Cultural Revolution. He then went on to confess total ignorance

of Stalin's repression of such Soviet artists as Shostakovich, Eisenstein and Mayakovsky.

The would-be Red Guard was caught off guard when asked what he thought should be done to protesters at Tiananmen Square who defaced Mao's portrait with ink, responding: "Um, wow! Ha. No, I don't think they should be punished. I think there should be struggle."

As for the Romanians who cut the hammer and sickle out of their flags, Johnson says: "The hypocrisy of it is U.S. imperialism calls those people heroes, and they call me a criminal. That shows they're not against the desecration of all flags, just their flag, just the symbol of U.S. imperialism. I think it's great when the Romanian youth ... cut the center out of the Romanian flag, because that's the flag of phony communism ... state capitalism, and Romanian people need to rebel against the whole Ceausescu autocracy ... the whole imperialist regime there."

No bleeding-heart lovers of civil liberties, Johnson and his RCP comrades are non-apologetic Stalinists; in a recent issue of their party organ, *Revolutionary Worker*, the RCP defends Stalin's annexation of Lithuania in one breath and denounces Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov as a "new czar" in the other. Johnson declares, "no deals with U.S. imperialism" but seems totally oblivious to the fact that Chairman Mao toasted then-President Richard Nixon while the U.S. dropped bombs and then photos of that toast in air raids on Vietnam to undermine revolutionary morale.

In the past, RCPers made headlines tossing red ink on U.S. and Soviet ambassadors to the United Nations. (Soviets are "social imperialists" in RCP parlance). But it took the unrepentant burning of the American flag at the 1984 Republican National Convention to create the RCP's first superstar. Johnson's fiery direct action and ensuing Supreme Court pyrrhic victory inflamed presidential politics in 1988, led to attempts to amend the U.S. Constitution and made the flag burner a valuable commodity on the talk-show and lecture circuits.

Last October, the irrepressible Maoist was arrested for burning another U.S. flag and charged with violating the new Flag Prevention Act. If found guilty, Johnson could spend a year behind bars. Oral arguments before the Supreme Court begin May 14.

Johnson received \$1,800 from the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii for an April 9 speech before a crowd of 300. The next day he was the unannounced lecturer at several of the university's classes. Johnson also spoke at several high schools in Oahu and is continuing his lecture tour in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and in Eugene and Portland, Ore.

During his Hawaiian visit Johnson seemed uncomfortable with his personality-cult celebrity status. Unafraid of neo-Nazis and prison, he asked this reporter to shut off the tape when asked who his booking agent is, fearing, perhaps, that he'd be perceived as an "Old Glory-hound."

—E. Rampell

By John B. Judis

STUART, FLA.

IN FLORIDA'S INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, ONCE A DEMOCRATIC bastion on the Atlantic Coast just below Cape Canaveral, all 15 county offices are now held by Republicans. Last month the county's last Democratic official, Tax Collector Gene Morris, switched parties. In Vero Beach, the county's largest town, Republicans have been outregistering Democrats seven to one since 1988.

In nearby Martin County, which was once solidly Democratic, registered Republican voters now outnumber Democrats 33,123 to 16,689. The Republicans hold four of five seats on the County Commission. If this trend holds in the 1990 elections, Republicans will dominate Florida—one of the nation's fastest growing states—well into the 21st century.

This fall, the Democrats will try to resist this rising Republican tide in Florida and in other states. But without strong candidates or viable issues, they may not succeed. While the Democrats will undoubtedly retain control of the U.S. House of Representatives, they could lose the Senate and they could lose a majority of the crucial governors' races.

Running for the border: The governors' races are important because in the early '90s state governments will set new boundaries for congressional districts based on the 1990 census. The party that controls a state will be able to reapportion districts to favor its candidates. According to initial estimates, California will gain seven congressional seats, Florida four, and Texas three at the expense of states in the Midwest and East. Each of these states is holding closely fought governor's races this year.

In California, former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein is battling state Attorney General John Van de Kamp for the Democratic nomination to fill the seat being vacated by Republican Gov. John Deukmejian. The winner will face the Republican nominee, Sen. Pete Wilson, in November. The liberal Van de Kamp was well ahead of Feinstein until last January, when Feinstein aired television commercials attacking Van de Kamp for his opposition to the death penalty. In a crime-crazy election year, Van de Kamp is vulnerable not only for opposing capital punishment but also for refusing, as Los Angeles County district attorney, to prosecute the Hillside Strangler. Van de Kamp claimed he did not have enough evidence. Another prosecutor, however, won an indictment and a conviction.

Both Feinstein and Van de Kamp would be slight underdogs against the well-financed and better known Wilson, but Feinstein, who can combine her pro-choice liberalism with her death-row conservatism, would probably be the greater threat.

In ordinary circumstances Florida's Republican Gov. Bob Martinez would be looking for a new job next November, but the Republican trend in Florida is so strong that it might win him re-election. Most political analysts rate Martinez the worst Florida governor in two decades and also one of the least popular. During his first year Martinez initially backed a 5 percent tax on such professional services as advertising and accounting but then buckled to advertising interests. Unwilling to raise taxes, he has left the state—which gains 900 new residents a

This year's election season could be trouble for Dems



Former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein is playing hardball in the California governor race.

day and has pressing needs for new roads, schools, and water projects—with deteriorating services and a \$1 billion budget shortfall. Even though Florida is a wealthy state, Martinez has allowed his budget for education to decline by 4 percent in four years, leaving the state with the nation's highest high school dropout rate.

Until this month, Democratic prospects looked dim. Their leading candidate was the colorless U.S. Rep. Bill Nelson, and the main Democratic tactic to stem the Republican tide was a despicable bill—introduced by an erstwhile Miami liberal and aimed at Hispanics—to require citizenship papers of new voter registrants. But then on April 12, former Sen. Lawton Chiles entered the race. Chiles, who has a reputation for being incorruptible, is very popular in Florida. He gained renown in 1970, when during his first successful Senate race he refused all contributions over \$10. This year he is promising not to accept any contributions over \$100—a promise that should not cripple him against the well-financed Martinez because the state party can attract large donors and run ads on his behalf.

Although the moderate Chiles will have to step gingerly around the tax issue, he will not be vulnerable on crime or drugs. He sponsored most of the Senate's anti-drug legislation. He also will be able to counterpose his pro-choice stand against Martinez' unsuccessful attempt last fall to drastically curtail abortions in Florida. If Chiles wins, Democrats could attempt to rebuild their support among middle-class whites and cut into the Republican margin among Hispanics.

Democrats also face a difficult test in increasingly Republican Texas, although they probably received a boost when State Treasurer Ann Richards edged Attorney General Jim Mattox for the Democratic gubernatorial

nomination. Both candidates, however, were severely damaged by a dirty campaign (see *In These Times*, April 4) and their opponent, millionaire oilmen Clayton Williams, is the kind of garrulous cowboy to whom Texans like to entrust their state government. But Richards, aided by Williams recent comparison of rape to bad weather—"if it's inevitable, just relax and enjoy it"—may be able to build a coalition of traditional Democrats and pro-choice independents.

Perhaps the most interesting governor's race will take place in Georgia, where former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young stands a good chance of winning the Democratic nomination against another liberal, Lt. Gov. Zell Miller. While Young is cultivating black votes for the primary—in which blacks make up about 36 percent of the electorate—he is running primarily on his record of bringing business to Atlanta. Young has already had to forsake his opposition to the death penalty and is beginning to warm to a state lottery, one of Miller's favorite causes.

If Young were to win, he would face a stiff challenge from Republican Johnny Isakson even in a state that has not elected a Republican since Reconstruction.

Senate races: In the Senate, the Democrats presently enjoy a 55-to-45 margin. This year 34 seats are up, 16 held by Democrats and 18 by Republicans. Although the numbers should favor the Democrats, the party has been unable to field strong candidates against vulnerable Republicans. The GOP, on the other hand, has recruited several strong candidates to run against their shakier foes.

Prominent Democrats began bailing out last year—former Vice President Walter Mondale refused to run against Minnesota Sen. Rudy Boschwitz, former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt turned down a rerun against increasingly unpopular Republican Sen.

Jesse Helms; former Idaho Gov. John Evans turned down a race for a seat being vacated by Sen. Jim McClure and former Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm begged off on the seat being vacated by Republican Sen. William Armstrong. The Democrats have also failed to recruit credible candidates against weak Republican incumbents in Oregon, South Dakota and Indiana (where appointed Republican Sen. Dan Coats is batting zero as a senator and has never been a strong candidate).

By contrast, the Republicans are mounting tough challenges to Democratic incumbents in Rhode Island, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska and could score upsets in Michigan and Montana. In Rhode Island, moderate Rep. Claudine Schneider stands a good chance

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against the increasingly ineffective Claiborne Pell, who, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has reduced that once-powerful body to utter irrelevance. By any measure but party loyalty, Pell deserves to go.

In Illinois, Rep. Lynn Martin is running against Paul Simon, who is open to charges that he frittered away his Senate term trying to become president. After a rocky start—she described Southern Illinois voters as "rednecks"—the moderate Martin has steadied her campaign.

One of the few close contests between a liberal and a hardline conservative will be in Iowa, where conservative Rep. Tom Tauke is challenging Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin. Harkin will likely try to tie Tauke to the evangelical pro-lifers with whom he has previously consorted, while Tauke is charging that Harkin, who has called for a 50 percent reduction in the military budget, is too liberal for Iowans. Itinerant liberals looking for a race to work in might well choose this one. Harkin, unlike Pell, is not expendable.

Death and taxes: So far the two parties are running the same way they did in 1988, with one important exception. At Republican Chairman Lee Atwater's urging, most Republicans have distanced themselves from pro-lifers. Iowa, Florida and Texas may be the only states where Democrats will be able to use abortion to their advantage.

Like George Bush in 1988, the Republicans are running for death and against taxes. Almost every Republican candidate is using a variation of Bush's Willie Horton commercial. In Florida, for instance, Martinez is running an ad in which he appears in front of a photo of serial killer Ted Bundy and declares, "I believe in the death penalty." The Democrats are countering these spots with Horton-style ads of their own.

As in 1988, the Democrats lack an effective national theme that can divert attention from issues like crime that have previously favored the Republicans. In 1986 several Democratic Senate candidates ran successfully on trade and economic nationalism, but so far few candidates have ventured into these waters and the Democratic National Committee has not urged them to do so.

As the absence of viable candidates and ringing issues demonstrates, the Democrats are having a problem in 1990—a midyear election that in the past has favored the party out of power. For the Democrats, this is a bad sign for the decade to come. □



Congress, you're no innocent dupe

By John Clyne

WASHINGTON

DURING OLIVER NORTH'S TRIAL LAST YEAR, his attorney, Brendan Sullivan, painted Congress as an innocent victim of a Reagan administration-wide conspiracy to withhold information. Sullivan claimed that, by lying to Congress about administration efforts to fund the contras, North did what the late CIA Director William Casey and others had done before him. At the trial of former National Security Adviser John Poindexter, however, attorney Richard Beckler sketched a different canvas. According to Beckler, Congress "knew very well" what was going on in Central America, and the charges against Poindexter were an unfair criminalization of "a political battle."

Poindexter's prosecutor, Dan Webb, fell back on Sullivan's interpretation of events, alleging a conspiracy to obstruct Congress and pointing out that, according to the law, it is still a crime to lie. While questioning Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-IN), a prosecution witness who chaired the House Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence in 1985-86, Webb underlined the crime's severity this way:

Webb: *You said our system works. Does it work if they lie?*

Hamilton: *The simplest system doesn't work if we lie to one another in government.*

Throughout the trial, U.S. District Court Judge Harold H. Greene was hostile to Poindexter's defense, repeatedly insisting that "this court and this jury do not sit in judgment on the president or the Congress or

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on the difference between the president and the Congress." In finding Poindexter guilty of five counts of obstruction, lying to Congress and conspiracy, the jury agreed with Webb.

Yet certain evidence, much of it excluded by Greene, indicates that Beckler is correct: Congress was no innocent dupe, suckered by a duplicitous administration. Hamilton,

as chairman of the intelligence committee, had access to information that revealed the extent of continuing administration efforts in Central America. However, committee members were muzzled by classification imperatives, and assumptions of the national-security state took precedence over the truth about the lives of 20,000 to 25,000 Nicaraguans dying in our proxy war.

Only the terms have changed: Nearly three years ago, in their opening statements at the Iran-contra hearings, several Congress members described a "grave constitutional crisis." The phrase has survived, frequently mutating into an alleged "assault" on the Constitution. Hamilton's complaint about Poindexter's lies rests on the idea that government accountability depends on good people being in office—an inversion of the idea that governments are set up to minimize the dangers posed by the temptations of power. Unwittingly, Hamilton revealed a breach of constitutional principles of which he was a prime agent.

Webb ponderously questioned each congressional witness at Poindexter's trial about the "importance" of these "factual inquiries" into the involvement of the National Security Council (NSC) in contra resupply. But during the course of the various congressional inquiries into those supply operations, Hamilton and his colleagues appeared reluctant to uncover any facts.

Imagine Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, asking a Dow Chemical vice president if Dow is polluting and then accepting the response as gospel. That's essentially what Hamilton and his congressional colleagues did three times during 1985 and 1986. Those "investigations," and the administration's response to them, led to one obstruction charge on which Poindexter was convicted. On closer inspection, the investigations reveal a Congress terrified of confronting the administration, incapable of pursuing a genuine investigation and wholly indoctrinated in the cult of intelligence.

Consider the following:

● On Jan. 16, 1985, with the Boland Amendment already prohibiting "the Central Intel-

ligence Agency, the Department of Defense or any other agency or entity of the U.S. involved in intelligence activities" from supporting "directly or indirectly military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua," Hamilton wrote to then Secretary of State George Shultz expressing "grave concern" because one contra leader "was a paid agent of the CIA." Hamilton also referred to another "prominent Nicaraguan" who was a paid CIA agent. The leader was Arturo Cruz Jr., and Hamilton's objections to the relationship with Cruz centered on Cruz' attempts to drum up support for the contra cause in Congress and with the American public. Hamilton wrote that it is against the law for the CIA to use covert-action assets "to influence U.S. political processes, public opinion, policies or media."

The CIA resisted Hamilton's inquiry, and a memo from North to then National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane dated Feb. 27, 1985, indicates that Shultz twice called Hamilton to mollify him. In that same memo, North told McFarlane that Rep. Gerry Studds (D-MA) was about to make the relationship public. Until then, Casey had wanted to keep Cruz on the payroll to ensure his responsiveness to U.S. direction. North assured Casey that having contra leader Adolfo Calero funnel money through a front organization would solve the cosmetic problem of direct U.S. payments to Cruz. To assuage Casey, North wrote that he "would guarantee Cruz' responsiveness to [Central Intelligence] Agency direction regardless of the new source for his income."

Hamilton accepted the new arrangement. But in a May 13, 1985, letter to Shultz, he complained that the other prominent Nicaraguan was still a paid asset. Interestingly, Hamilton told Shultz that he did not object "to the CIA having a relationship with such an individual" but objected to that individual taking public part in U.S. political processes.

Didn't CIA control of contra leaders constitute a gross violation of Boland? No doubt the principals would insist Cruz was a "political" leader, but what could more clearly be "indirect military" support for the contras than disbursement of appropriated funds to their publicly identified leaders?

Five weeks elapsed between Hamilton's letter and North's memo, during which time Hamilton spoke with Shultz twice. In the May 13, 1985, letter, four months after his first inquiry, Hamilton was still expressing to Shultz—but not to the American people—his "strong feelings" about this "misuse of the CIA." Hamilton treated the incident as an aberration, an exception to the normal functioning of lawful covert action in which Congress plays an essential role in keeping the actions of the government secret from those paying for them.

● In summer 1985, media reports surfaced that the NSC staff, in particular North, was assisting the contras by fundraising and offering military advice. Hamilton and former Rep. Michael Barnes (D-MD), then chairman of the House Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee, wrote McFarlane to inquire about the reports. In a letter dated Sept. 5, 1985, and in a meeting with Hamilton's committee on September 10, McFarlane denied the reports. His lies at the time led to McFarlane's guilty plea during his own case and form the groundwork of Poindexter's conviction on one obstruction count. Hamilton accepted McFarlane's assurances; Barnes was only a little more curious.

● In October 1985, Barnes wrote to McFarlane to ask for access to NSC documents

Test your Eco-IQ!

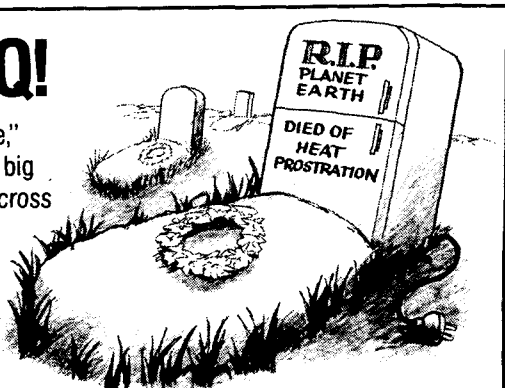
How large is the stratospheric "ozone hole," discovered over the Antarctic? a) about as big as a basketball b) several hundred yards across c) the size of the state of Rhode Island d) as large as the entire United States
What percentage of gasoline today is burned by cars idling their engines in city traffic jams? a) 3% b) 5% c) 10% d) 25% e) 50%

How many pounds of wood and paper products does the average American use up in a year? a) 50 pounds b) 220 pounds c) 4,500 pounds d) 10,500 pounds

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regarding North's contra activities. McFarlane responded that, because of the level of classification, Barnes could come over and view the documents himself but could not bring his staff with him or take possession of the documents. The White House made that stipulation certain that it would cause Barnes to reject the meeting. He did, passing the inquiry on to Hamilton, who as intelligence committee chairman was used to handling classified material and whose staff had security clearance.

Barnes is a lawyer and, as chairman of the subcommittee, presumably had the knowledge to understand the operation's details. Yet he passed up an opportunity to call the administration's Central America bluff because he couldn't have his staff review the evidence.

• The following June, with Bob Parry of the Associated Press and Alfonso Chardy of the *Miami Herald* uncovering the details of the contra-resupply operation and a House vote to resume \$100 million in military aid approaching, the House Democratic leaders asked Rep. Ron Coleman (D-TX) to give their response to Reagan's weekly radio address. Seeking a "news hook" for the speech that would catch the media's attention, Coleman's and Barnes' staffs launched a resolution of inquiry, a formal House demand for information from the president. The resolution asked for "a complete list and description" of North's contra contacts and his communications with administration officials regarding those contacts. As described by Victor Johnson, a Barnes staffer who helped draft the resolution, resolutions of inquiry are rare and are usually used only as negotiating levers to pry information from the administration.

After the House voted on June 25, 1986, to resume contra military aid, the resolution became moot. As one staffer who helped draft it said, "We wanted to get some publicity. We got the publicity and lost anyway. At that point everyone seemed to lose interest in the resolution." Indeed, the Armed Services Committee, one of three committees to which it was referred, voted the resolution down shortly after the House voted to restore contra aid. Nevertheless, Hamilton, caught between the liberals in his own party and the intelligence community, had to make some show of tenacity. He got Poindexter to agree to a meeting between North and the intelligence committee. As a pre-condition of the meeting, Poindexter insisted the committee review McFarlane's earlier correspondence with Hamilton. For adopting McFarlane's lies, Poindexter now faces up to five years in jail and a \$250,000 fine.

In a memo to Coleman, Johnson, whose testimony was excluded by Judge Greene, wrote, "As a practical matter it could be very difficult to get much meaningful information out of the NSC. If we really want to get it, we would have to subpoena them and take them to court." North met with the committee Aug. 6, 1986, and, in Webb's words, "he lied, and he lied, and he lied." Afterward, Hamilton, the seat of his britches smoldering and his eyes stinging from smoke, insisted there was no reason to keep looking for a fire.

In an *In These Times* interview this past April 4, Hamilton said, "When dealing with the government, the custom is to go to the top. We did, and they gave us a flat-out assurance. ...We could not find any witnesses to come forward. On the one hand, we had the flat denial from the top officials in the administration; on the other, unsubstantiated news reports. ...Whenever we asked the reporters,

of course, they wouldn't reveal their sources."

Michael O'Neil, chief counsel of the intelligence committee under Hamilton, echoed this baffling plaint, insisting to *In These Times*, "We had no names; tell me, who could we have asked?" O'Neil ignores the fact that he and Hamilton's committee had access to the most sophisticated electronic surveillance network in the world, and reporters had already identified more than a dozen crucial figures in the operation.

• Parsing the details of what Congress knew and when it knew it ignores the greatest example of congressional complicity in the web of secrecy, lies and murder that passes for U.S. foreign policy: the Iran contra hearings themselves. As chairman of the House committee, Hamilton joined Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) in establishing the absurd rules under which the joint Iran contra committee had to operate: a narrow witness list omitting critical figures, an artificial time deadline by which the investigation had to be completed, grants of immunity to key witnesses and a focus on the diversion to the contras of the profits from arms sales to Iran.

No gun, but lots of ammunition: Watergate suggests the worst possible metaphor for understanding Iran contra. As the media searched for a smoking gun to prove President Reagan's knowledge of the diversion, they tossed aside handfuls of purloined letters that, individually, establish Reagan's complicity in both operations and, taken together, spotlight the true constitutional crisis. The nation suffers not from a tightly held conspiracy to subvert existing institutions but from a governing bureaucratic culture that accepts as faith what *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham calls "the fatuous and cynical belief that the cause of liberty can be made to stand on the pedestal of criminal violence."

The constitutional confrontation trumpeted at the beginning of the Iran contra hearings evaporated because Congress, which accepts the assumptions underlying covert action generally, is severely limited in its ability to restrain a particular operation. Information on operations is classified, and Congress abides by such a classification.

Discussion of classified material by members is punished swiftly. In September 1988, for example, then House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) let it slip that the CIA had admitted to fomenting riots in Nicaragua, the jailed leaders of which were trumpeted by the administration as martyrs to liberty. The incident touched off an inside-the-Beltway furor, but not over the despicable lies being fobbed off on the American public or the cynical attempt to depose the government of a sovereign state. Rather, Wright was pilloried for violating the sanctity of classified information.

With such power implicit in the choice, can any administration reasonably be expected to resist the temptation to pursue controversial policies through covert action? When in doubt, have the president sign a finding and tell Congress all about it; then if your opponents base their arguments on facts, they become the guilty ones.

Of course, Congress as a whole isn't cut in on the fun. Only the intelligence committees are. To ensure that everyone gets to play, though, membership on the House committee is limited to three two-year terms. Thus, just as the members are gaining the expertise necessary to deal with the most sophisticated technology available to the government, they must leave the committee.

In the House, the intelligence committee authorizes the budget for covert action and reports it to the floor without revealing what's in it. The rest of the House then votes for it on faith. When the time comes to appropriate the funds, the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee goes through the same trick and buries intelligence in the defense-appropriations bill.

As demonstrated by Barnes' refusal to pore over the documents, Congress depends heavily on staff. Given the six-year rotation, that is especially true in intelligence committee work. The House committee has a "professional" staff that works for the committee as a whole, not individual members, and they

On close inspection, the Iran/contra investigations reveal a Congress terrified of confronting the administration, incapable of pursuing a genuine investigation and wholly indoctrinated in the cult of intelligence.

are the only House staffers who have official access to classified information. Thus, a member active in foreign affairs is stripped of the assistance of trusted staffers when appointed to the committee.

And where does one garner the experience necessary to become a professional staff member? Professional intelligence work, of course. Dan Childs, the current staff director of the House committee, is a career CIA official who shuttled through a revolving door twice, serving a stint on the Senate committee staff in the '70s, returning to the CIA and then back to Capitol Hill. Childs insists he aggressively monitors intelligence agencies, and perhaps he does. But it is difficult to imagine, for example, the Energy and Commerce Committee relying heavily on the ranks of Procter and Gamble executives from which to hire staff.

Even granting the staff the benefit of the doubt regarding their personal motivations, the House intelligence committee is hardly staffed for aggressive oversight. According to *Congressional Quarterly's Congressional Staff Directory*, the Oversight and Evaluation Subcommittee has a mere two staffers who are expected to oversee institutions with a budget estimated at \$25 billion to \$30 billion per year, greater than the military expenditures of all but a handful of countries and more than the gross national product of many of the countries whose governments the U.S. seeks to depose.

Truth and consequences: In dealing with Iran, Reagan administration officials overstepped the few accepted limitations of covert action. They didn't tell Congress about the plan, and they did business with an officially designated enemy. The ensuing furor demanded "action," but genuine action would have required Congress to assert its legitimate constitutional authority, with three terrible consequences.

First, Congress would have had to utter the dreaded "I word." If indeed the NSC staff had "assaulted" the Constitution, then all those memos initialed "RR" might have meant presidential impeachment. Worse, the

next time a president decided to defend American lives and property in Panama, Congress would be forced to debate and vote on a declaration of war and, heaven forbid, expose themselves to critical public scrutiny and electoral defeat. Finally, when the Democrats at last returned to the White House, they would have surrendered the right and power to subvert their foreign enemies on a whim.

This last point was overlooked throughout the Iran/contra debate. The tragic result was a show trial in 1987 designed to assuage possible public fear that all might not be well in Washington and carefully circumscribed to avoid the true nature of American policy. Hamilton and Inouye enforced the terms of the debate, cutting off inquiry into the real scandals. Rep. Jack Brooks (D-TX), for example, was permitted to ask North only a single question regarding his work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on a plan to suspend the Constitution in a "crisis."

That show reached its farcical conclusion when Hamilton wrote a Nov. 22, 1987, op-ed article for the *Los Angeles Times* in which he summarized the recommendations in the Iran contra committee's report. It is difficult to imagine a more feckless statement from an elected official.

[T]he agencies carrying out covert operations must deal in a spirit of good faith with Congress. New and ongoing covert operations must be reported fully, not cloaked by broad findings. Answers to intelligence committee inquiries that are technically true but misleading frustrate the process of legislative review. A dialogue that requires Congress to ask precisely the right question if it is to get the right answer is not a dialogue at all and is not a relationship based on trust and mutual respect.

Where does the Constitution speak of a relationship based on trust and mutual respect? Article 1, Section 8 explicitly gives the war-making power to Congress, which has yielded it to the executive, adding the right to do so secretly. Presidential declarations of war are called covert-action findings, under which U.S. soldiers and agents have shed blood in more than a dozen countries since World War II. By the time Hamilton's article appeared, what remained of Congress' outrage over the Iran contra affair had been reduced to petulance that Reagan had not bothered to tell them in secret that he was exercising power they conceded 40 years ago. In contrast to its public image, Congress has been a willing and enthusiastic participant in a charade of "accountability."

Politically, Hamilton and Barnes pass for the good guys on Capitol Hill. Hamilton testified at Poindexter's trial that he wanted to stop the contra war, even voting against the "humanitarian aid" sham. Barnes was such a pest to the administration that his defeat in the 1986 Senate primary in Maryland by now Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MA) touched off a round of administration celebration on the NSC's electronic mail system.

Ultimately, however, both Hamilton and Barnes subjugated their political and moral beliefs to their acceptance of a patently unconstitutional mechanism that permits the president to do whatever he wishes, checked only by a lame requirement that he tell Congress what he has already done and balanced only by his own "good faith" and that of his henchmen in the intelligence agencies. □

John Clyne is a Washington-based freelance writer who covered John Poindexter's trial.

IN THESE TIMES APRIL 25-MAY 1, 1990 9

Workplace

Continued from page 3

Investigative reporters target private businesses, they are more likely to examine corporate financial health than workers' physical and mental health.

Ironically, unions, the main on-the-job worker defense, have not done as much as they should to make worker safety a burning public issue. Because the unions have chosen low-profile channels of collective bargaining or government lobbying, they have not built a popular, grass-roots occupational-safety movement. The absence of such a movement compounds the distrust unions encounter in their occasional forays to get more publicity. It also means reporters don't have the readymade drama that makes for an easy story. Outrage or harm, not risk, determines press coverage, says Rutgers' Sandman.

Press coverage also has been skewed toward government pronouncements, with crippling consequences. When the Reagan administration decided to stymie new regulations and to cut back occupational-safety enforcement, most of the press commensurately paid the issue very little attention. But as the toll of disability and death of the early '80s became more evident and there were threats of public exposure, OSHA began issuing large fines to major corporations such as Chrysler and IBP, the Nebraska-based meatpacking plant. But it took a report by NSWI to point out how misleading the usually uncollected "megafines" were. When the Reagan administration issued updates of permissible exposure limits on 600 chemicals in 1988, OSHA's view predominated in the press despite labor-union criticism. Months later, Bob Bauers and Merritt Wallick of the Wilmington, Delaware, *News-Record* wrote a devastating series on how these new

limits were largely set by a private group heavily influenced by the chemical industry itself.

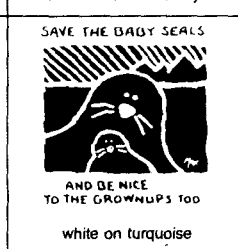
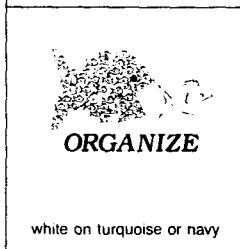
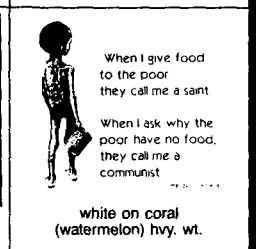

Made in the USA: During the '80s, workplace safety was a victim of an ideological obsession with economic "competitiveness" that supposedly was threatened by worker demands and unions. Yet, as NSWI points out, workers die in other industrialized countries at one-fifth to three-fourths the rate they do in the U.S., while those countries' products outsell American goods. Even more telling, if the U.S. had Sweden's workplace-fatality rate, the country would save \$12 billion a year. In this light, the cost of lax occupational safety is a drag on competitiveness, not a necessary trade-off for economic well-being as many reporters (pre-eminently Peter Passell of the *New York Times*) assume. Indeed, as Eric Frumin, health and safety director of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, argues, economic pres-

ures—especially those created by the takeover craze of the '80s—may be the main cause of increased workplace danger.

As the Reagan years are belatedly given critical assessment, there are slight signs of growing press interest in the workplace. Labor unions are also more aggressively drawing attention to worsening health and safety problems, and Kinney's NSWI has actively encouraged press coverage with its critical studies. A few publications and the occasional television show such as ABC's "Working in America: Hazardous Duty," have recently paid more attention to workplace safety, joining the ranks of the *Los Angeles Times* (Henry Weinstein), *Newsday* (Ken Crowe and Ron Roel), and the *Hartford Courant* (Mike McGuire)—newspapers experts most often praise for occupational-health coverage in the '80s.

But the press has largely flubbed its responsibility to be the independent watchdog for the little person against overweening economic power and bureaucratic insensitivity. Through its own shortcomings, which made it more vulnerable to the vagaries of outside influences, the press has performed erratically in covering a major field: the dangers of the environment in which more than 100 million Americans spend one-third of their lives. □

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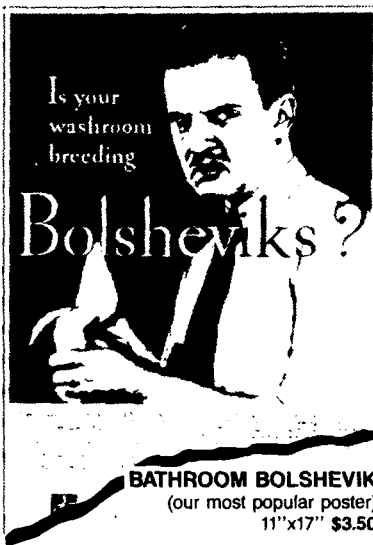
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SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

By William K. Burke

Clean air compromises, pollution sales

ON APRIL 3 THE SENATE PASSED A NEW clean air bill, riddled with compromise and caution. After weeks of bitter wrangling over various amendments meant either to save polluters money and preserve jobs or to preserve ecosystems and lower the health risks from breathing air near U.S. cities, the lawmakers seemed happy to reach a consensus and approved the bill by a vote of 89 to 11.

But while it is an important piece of environmental legislation, the bill also represents a retreat from some current environmental standards. There are indications that even its most pro-environmental requirements won't eliminate the problems resulting from this country's abuse of the atmosphere.

The bill has four main provisions:

- It requires coal-fired electric power plants—most of which are located in the Midwest—to reduce the 25 million tons of acid-rain-causing sulfur-dioxide particles they emit annually to 15 million tons by the year 2000.

- It requires all U.S. automobiles to meet California's new standards for a 50 percent reduction in emission of toxic pollutants by 1994, one year after the limits take effect in the western state.

- It gives U.S. companies five years to install the best available pollution-control technology for 191 hazardous chemicals their factories routinely pour into the air.

- And it gives U.S. cities and metropolitan regions that currently violate clean-air standards from 10 to 20 years to meet the new clean-air requirements. It is currently estimated that 150 million Americans breathe air that falls below federal government safety standards.

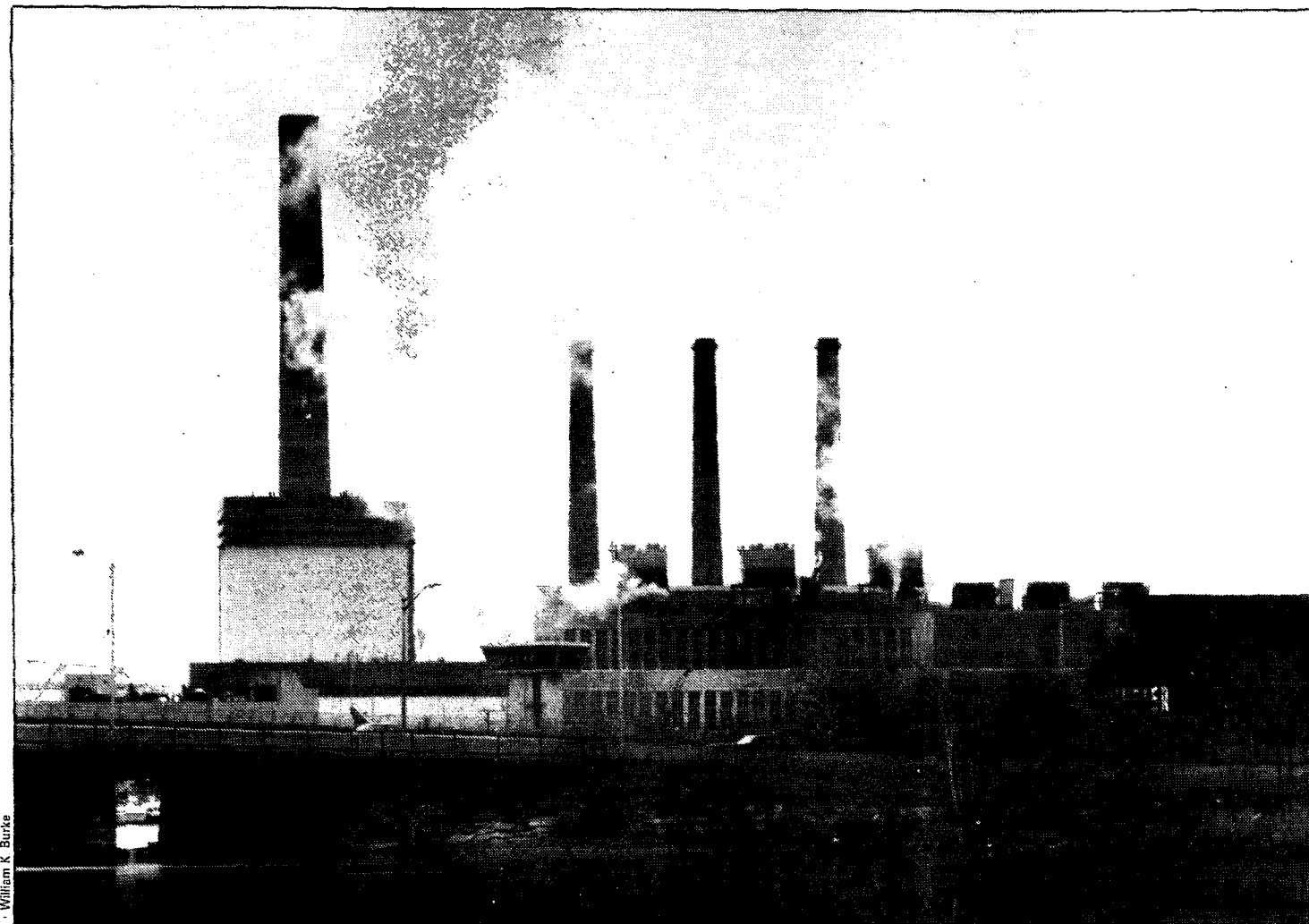
Breathing uneasy: Industry lobbyists complained that the Senate bill would cost twice as much to implement as a similar bill now in the House. Environmentalist responses to the Senate bill ranged from cautious optimism that the green lobby could use the House bill to regain provisions lost in the Senate to outrage that Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) compromised health and ecology to get the bill passed.

"That bill will reduce pollution," says Connie Mahan of the Audubon Society. "The question is, will it go far enough to really clean up the air and provide a measure of safety for all the breathers out there? We're not sure it will."

Mahan thinks some of the battles lost by environmentalists in the Senate might be won in the House. The most important of these is a provision that would have allowed the federal government to write pollution-control plans for states and cities that don't meet clean-air standards on their own. But even if the provision passes the House, it would mean only a return to current laws. And any bill coming out of the House will have to meet the approval of House Energy and Commerce Chairman John Dingell (D-MI), a staunch ally of the auto industry.

"This isn't a clean-air act, it's a hold-your-breath act," says the Sierra Club's Daniel Becker. "The senators took advantage of a back-room deal to protect their favorite local polluter—they all lined up outside George Mitchell's office to do so," he adds.

In February, Mitchell introduced a much tougher version of the bill, which Republican senators immediately threatened with a filibuster. Environmental lobbyists tried to assemble enough senators to force a vote, but



Under the new clean air bill, coal-fired plants could clean up their acts and sell "pollution credits" to other culprits.

Mitchell took his bill off the Senate floor and instead struck a deal with the Bush administration and Republican Senate leaders. The new deal traded any major impact on auto emissions for a 40 percent reduction in sulfur-dioxide emissions from coal-fired electric power plants, a primary concern of Mitchell's Maine constituents.

But Mahan claims there is uncertainty as to whether the bill's sulfur-dioxide reduction would salvage lakes and streams already damaged by acid rain. "I think it will help some areas that are borderline," she says. "Nobody knows whether some of those lakes in the Adirondacks that are sterile will ever come back."

Alkaline compounds contained in soil can neutralize excess acid content in rainwater, but only for a while. Once the soil's "buffering capacity"—which varies from almost nothing to unlimited—is used up, wildlife and fish in surrounding waterways begin to die. "If you completely deplete the buffering capacity in an ecosystem, you can't ever really get it back, since natural rainwater is acidic to begin with," says Mahan. "We were looking for a 12-million-ton bill, but the [cost] difference between 10 million and 12 million tons was really quite high—it was one of those things that fell to the calculator."

Polluted commodities: The new bill does represent the first government attempt to combat acid rain. It also is the first proposal to enact the concept of "emissions trading," or pollution rights, which would benefit the giant coal-fired electric plants in the Midwest. By installing pollution-control equipment, plants can reduce their sulfur-dioxide emissions to above government standards and, in turn, earn pollution credits that can be sold to other polluters. The aim is to decrease net national pollution levels while allowing local industries to lower their pollution-fighting costs through buying and selling the credits.

While the introduction of emissions trading was a victory for industry, environmental

lobbyists did manage to block two amendments that could have effectively gutted the bill's toxics-reduction provisions. One, inserted during Mitchell's negotiations with the White House, would have allowed companies to buy out neighborhoods, and thus remove the people who are breathing polluted air, rather than install pollution-control equipment. "We called it the environmental dead-zone provision," says Mahan. "It was such an outrageous provision that

ENVIRONMENT

industry was embarrassed to lobby against removing it."

The second victory was the defeat of a White House-sponsored amendment that would have given local environmental authorities the power to issue permits allowing companies to violate the new bill's pollution standards. According to Mahan, the amendment "would have completely undermined the remaining strength of the bill. It's at that [local] level that the administrators are much more susceptible to the argument that 'We can't do this; it is going to cost us a bunch of jobs.'"

Hollow laws and big cars: Notably absent from the bill is a provision to limit the carbon-dioxide emissions believed by many scientists to cause global warming. In the course of its driving life—usually estimated at 100,000 miles—the average American car pumps out 34 tons of carbon compounds. But Bush's stand on global warming parallels that of the Reagan administration on acid rain: more studies are needed before any significant actions can be taken.

The Bush administration demanded that Mitchell scrap his initial proposal for a mandated increase in the fuel efficiency of American cars, which would have raised the average mileage rate per gallon from 27.5 to 40. Combining the administration's refusal to go along with a mileage increase and cuts in

federal funding to research renewable-energy sources like solar and wind power with the nation's \$50 billion annual imported oil bill creates a dismal impression of the economic and environmental future of the U.S.

The Senate missed a chance to show the world that it takes the atmosphere seriously. Strong action to reduce this country's output of global-warming gasses would have made American arguments that developing nations should not bulldoze their rain forests for quick profits much more convincing. An amendment offered by Timothy Wirth (D-CO) and Pete Wilson (R-CA) to tighten the bill's auto-emissions standards and require automakers to produce 1 million cars that run on alternative fuels such as methanol or natural gas was declared a "deal buster" by Senate leaders and lost 52-to-46.

Sen. Quentin Burdick (D-ND) managed to insert an amendment that exempts from the acid-rain provision coal-fired power plants in states where every county is presently meeting clean-air standards. Not surprisingly, North Dakota's five worst-polluting plants fit the bill.

This kind of short-range thinking harkens back to the days when factory and power-plant operators joked that the best air-pollution control was a strong westerly breeze. Already high-altitude trees in the U.S. are showing signs of *Waldsterben*—large-scale forest death that has ravaged central Europe, largely due to Joseph Stalin's cheap-energy policy for industrializing the former Soviet bloc.

The U.S. economy also has benefited from a cheap-energy policy that has allowed the environment to suffer while industry avoids paying for pollution controls. But unlike the countries of Eastern Europe, our government does not seem to be planning any dramatic environmental or economic reforms. □

William K. Burke writes regularly on environmental issues for *In These Times*.

IN THESE TIMES APRIL 25-MAY 1, 1990 11

By Terry Allen

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

THIS SPRING, FOR THE 46TH TIME, THE UNITED Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) deliberated six weeks on the state of human rights in the world. Attending the session is like watching blood dry.

Mostly in the final weeks, the 43 commission member nations vote on a series of resolutions recommending action or censure. The 75 observer nations and dozens of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can speak on particular issues. Leveling attacks on rival states and avoiding becoming the focus of condemnatory resolutions are basic aims of many of the attenders.

Hundreds of hours of self-serving attacks, counterattacks, parries and defenses, interspersed with chilling accounts of torture and abuse, precede the voting. A kind of blunt tedium, horrifying in itself, sets in. Even the sleek diplomats, whose expensive European cars are parked outside the cool marble Palais, acknowledge the irony of holding a human-rights conference in Geneva, an affluent, smugly efficient city far from the smell of electrode on flesh.

In the case of moderately horrendous abuses, resolutions call for the appointment of advisory services. Then, U.N. experts, subject to government approval, teach and help implement international standards within the country's offending institutions—usually the military, police and judiciary.

The designation of a special rapporteur, the commission's strongest censure, is reserved for those countries found to have consistent and gross violations. The rapporteur investigates, documents and reports back in detail to the next session on what violations were perpetrated and by whom. Needless to say, scrutiny of this kind can prove embarrassing to targeted governments.

Occasionally, the raw testimony of a victim who has the money, connections and sophistication to seek out this forum is heard. But usually internal intrigues, myopic feuds and jockeying for political advantage assume more importance than the events decried and chronicled. In the halls, restaurants and at the posh evening receptions, grim trades are made: "Vote with my country not to condemn X and I will vote with you to condemn Y."

Even more blatant deals are cut. The U.S. in particular uses its political and economic clout like a blunt instrument to bully compliance with its objectives. In the early years of the commission, which was founded after World War II, the U.S. was able to use the forum to excoriate its rivals and punish those Third World countries that were insufficiently servile. Now, however, there is a growing sense among representatives to the U.S. body that, despite its enormous military, economic and political power, the U.S. is in decline, increasingly out of touch and isolated.

It is no longer unusual for the U.S. to lose important votes. (In the commission, unlike the Security Council, voting is by majority rule and no countries have veto power.) Despite U.S. pressure, in February the commission condemned the Israeli resettlement of Soviet Jews in the Occupied Territories and the U.S. invasion of Panama. The commission also rejected loosening sanctions on South Africa.

The Cuban squeeze: When it came to the vilification of Cuba, however, the U.S. pulled out all the stops. Since the 1987 session, it has unsuccessfully tried to relegate this "bastion of Stalinism" in its backyard to the status of world pariah. To this end, the

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The U.S. delegation to the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission: cowboys clinging to the 18th century?

THE POLITICS OF

U.S. has unleashed an unending stream of vitriol and expended enormous political and financial capital. Leading the latest U.S. attack was Armando Valladares, a former Batista policeman who does not speak English.

In response to this attack, the Cuban ambassador released what he claimed was a leaked State Department communique from Secretary of State James Baker to U.S. ambassadors around the world. In it Baker admitted that "our action in Panama may complicate achievement of our UNHRC goals—[but] Cuba should not be allowed to get off the hook." The main focus of the seven-party strategy detailed in the confidential report was "a high-level lobbying campaign tailored to individual countries" in which they were reminded of how much aid they might, or might not, receive from the U.S.

Despite this intense pressure, Cuba avoided sanction in the current session. But, in what the U.S. touted as a victory, the Caribbean nation was added to next year's agenda for possible action. When the close vote was announced, the U.S. delegation, in a display of tasteless and disproportionate jubilation, jumped up and down slapping each other on the back like good ol' boys after a touchdown.

The defection of several East European states—particular targets of U.S. arm-twist-

ing—from the Soviet voting bloc proved to be a key factor in the U.S. victory. Bulgaria and Hungary voted with the U.S., while Czechoslovakia and Poland (which as observers cannot vote) co-sponsored the U.S. anti-Cuban resolution.

Off the record, many delegates complain about the heavy-handed application of carrot and stick by the U.S. and quietly applaud Cuba's vocal and intransigent opposition to the Goliath to the north. They see the Cuba vote as a pyrrhic victory.

Even the sleek diplomats acknowledge the irony of holding a human-rights conference in Geneva, an affluent, smugly efficient city far from the smell of electrode on flesh.

Perhaps the most graphic evidence of increasing U.S. impotence and isolation lies in its inability to shape the overall goals and direction of the commission itself. Breaking consensus, the U.S. registered a petulant vote of "non-participation" on a U.N. definition of fundamental human rights affirming that social and economic rights must be placed on an equal footing with civil and political rights. The U.S. also rejected the concept of granting rights to states rather than only to individuals.

The French and American revolutions established the primacy of political and civil rights such as freedom of speech, assembly and property. Implementation of these liberal ideals, now called first-generation rights, was historically linked to capitalist development. They were seen as synonymous with democracy, and any country that failed to meet Western standards and values was condemned as backward and/or despotic.

For decades, the Communist bloc downplayed, postponed and scorned first-generation rights. Instead, Soviet-style socialism placed primacy on economic and social rights: housing, education, medical care and employment. This bloc, in turn, condemned as exploitative those countries that failed to implement this second generation of rights.

Both superpowers viewed attempts to institute a political system that incorporated the two generations of rights as threats to themselves. In Hungary and Guatemala in the '50s, in Vietnam and Czechoslovakia in the '60s, in Chile in the '70s and in Grenada and Nicaragua in the '80s, that "threat of a good example" was crushed and the offending experiments militarily or economically destroyed.

In the past decade a potentially revolutionary and widespread international consensus has formed around international standards for human rights. At least on a theoretical level, all countries of the world—except the U.S.—acknowledge that the two generations of rights are inextricably interdependent. Increasingly, popular movements and governments are demanding that civil/political and social/economic rights be considered as a seamless web—both sets must be implemented before either can be fully enjoyed. Simply put, the right to vote is of little value to the person dying of hunger. Conversely, even with a full stomach, quality of life without liberal freedoms is seriously diminished.

Out of step: The theoretical groundwork for this consensus was laid down by the UNHRC shortly after its formation in the wake of World War II, when the U.N. drafted and codified internationally accepted standards and covenants. Since that time, the U.N. definition of fundamental human rights has been expanding. The U.S., which is one of the few nations not to have signed the covenant, has remained rigidly rooted to a concept of rights that calcified in the 18th century.

The U.S. position, as articulated by Ambassador Morris Abram, reflects that stagnation. Civil and political rights, he told the commission, must precede all others because, by facilitating free enterprise and individual initiative, they promote the creation of wealth. After a country accumulates wealth, other rights will naturally follow.

"It doesn't cost a penny" to implement civil and political rights, said Abram. Even the poorest countries can afford them. On the other hand, "economic rights require time, resources and enough wealth to get the job done."

Many other countries disagree, citing not only the cost of running an equitable judicial and electoral system but of educating their people to enable them to take advantage of their rights. They also point out the most obvious flaw: in the U.S.—which has had the luxury of time, wealth and resources—economic and social rights have not trickled down to large segments of the population.

The U.S. shrugs off such criticism and appears to revel in its cowboy image. "We stand in splendid isolation," said one member of the U.S. delegation in private, "because we are the only country with balls."

Be that as it may, the U.S. is clearly out of step with the widespread insistence on a synthesis of first- and second-generation rights. Partly because of this ideological recalcitrance, the U.S. is in danger of misinterpreting recent trends in Eastern Europe.

Many at the U.N. commission see the liberalization of Eastern Europe and the USSR as a manifestation of an expanded concept of fundamental human rights. They believe recent dramatic changes there are part of a process to join democracy with socialism. While clearly affecting short-term stability, democratization is not seen by A.L. Adamishin, deputy foreign minister of the USSR, as an inherent threat to socialist principles. "We are still socialist, and we will remain socialist," he told *In These Times*. "Don't ever forget that."

The U.S., however, continues to see the political system of democracy and the economic system of socialism as mutually exclusive. It therefore interprets the changes in the Soviet bloc as simply a move toward capitalism and a U.S. victory in the Cold War.

Just as the U.S. narrowly interprets the Nicaraguan revolution and FMLN insurgency as examples of the expansion of the Communist empire, it now views the dissolution of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe simply as an expansion of world capitalism.

The third generation: While the U.S. clings to the 18th century and the rest of the world struggles to create an amalgam of first- and second-generation rights, a new challenge is being mounted from the bottom up. Many indigenous peoples and environmental movements are demanding a third generation of human rights. The value of first- and second-generation rights is seriously diminished, they argue, without a clean, healthy and unpolluted world in which to enjoy them.

Including ecological concerns within the context of fundamental human rights places much of the responsibility for the definition of standards and regulations squarely on



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government. The implications are radical and wide-reaching. The U.N. has begun to assess the dimensions of the problem to set goals.

This spring a broad coalition of UNHRC members introduced a resolution that, while recommending no action, encouraged an expanding role for the world body in defining the relationship among technology, development and the ecological integrity of the planet. UNHRC is "aware," stated the resolution, "that the preservation of life-sustaining ecosystems under conditions of rapid scientific and technological development is of vital importance for the protection of the human species and the promotion of human rights." The resolution was accepted without a vote, despite irritable quibbling from the U.S. and Japan over wording.

The current status of ecological rights is similar to that of second-generation rights more than 40 years ago, when they first entered the international frame of debate. The U.N. has taken the first step in acknowledging a common global problem but is distressingly far from defining objectives, implementing standards or regulating compliance.

Serious North South splits exist over how and if this newly defined generation of rights can be implemented. The double standard and hypocrisy of the developed world on the subject of the environment rankles the South. While domestic popular pressures force the North to clean up its own act, it exports obsolete and dangerous technologies and toxic wastes to the South. Although the North continues to consume the vast

bulk of the world's resources for the comfort of its own citizens, it criticizes the destruction of rain forests abroad. At the same time as the dependent South is being strangled and blackmailed by the North through unstable, artificially low commodity prices and the debt burden, the North is seeking to impose environmental and conservation standards it ignored during its own reckless development.

Not surprisingly, much of the South sees environmentalism as a luxury it can't afford. By pushing up costs and protecting valuable resources, Northern policies, cynically disguised as environmental concern, will further retard the South's rate of development and exacerbate its disadvantages. Nonetheless, there is a growing movement within the South to place third-generation environmental rights within the seamless web.

Politicization of the UNHRC: As the accepted definition of fundamental human rights expands, the extent and seriousness of violations of even the most basic rights are not diminishing.

One report after another is read into the record at the commission while delegates scan newspapers, fix deals in the back of the room or discuss weekend ski plans. Underlings are assigned to keep track of the proceedings and monitor areas of particular concern. In general, only when the U.S., the USSR or Amnesty International address the body is there sufficient silence in the room to hear the speeches without using the ear-phone system built into each seat.

The majority of the speeches by governments and NGOs document the growing number of disappearances, genocidal practices against ethnic, religious and national groups and the increasing sophistication of torture and control techniques, as well as the use of mercenaries and the growing disparity in the distribution of wealth between the North and South. Resolutions dealing with this trend are often drawn and passed less on a case's gravity than on the relative political clout of the violator, the accuser and their allies. China, for example, despite the Tiananmen Square massacre, escaped official sanction from the commission, as did Iraq, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and the Philippines—all of which had particularly dismal records last year.

Cuba, the U.S.' *bête noire*, was placed on next year's agenda to be considered as a consistent human-rights offender. This despite the fact that its record is relatively bloodless and 75 percent of its reported violations involved lack of freedom of travel.

Another politicizing factor within the commission is the growing strength of geographical blocs. These alliances function to limit condemnation of, or investigation into, human-rights abuses in their own regions. The African bloc, for example, forms a united front to condemn South Africa but also functions to lock out any formal criticism of even the most flagrant abuses of any other African state.

The NGOs find these regional blocs to be a further impediment to the already-difficult task of targeting egregious violators. The U.S., which rarely finds itself in political bed with the NGO community, is also distressed over the formation of the Southern regional voting blocs—although for different reasons. This phenomenon threatens Northern strengths and impedes the U.S.' ability to single out and pressure any individual bloc member. The Western Europeans are concerned about decreased power of both their own bloc and

the NGOs, who can, because of their unofficial status, articulate positions that governments find too politically sensitive.

"It is ironic," said a representative from a Guatemalan human-rights organization, "that we must look to the North for leadership in the condemnation of human-rights violations, since their colonialism created the current dynamic and their economic and military policies help perpetuate the abuses."

The blood of Guatemala: The Guatemalan opposition is in a position to know how bloc clout functions. In one of the fiercest commission battles this spring, the European bloc, strongly led by Sweden, tried to introduce a resolution to change Guatemala from its four-year status as recipient of advisory services to that of most serious offender. It would then be assigned a special rapporteur who would investigate and report back in detail to the commission at the next session.

Guatemalan opposition and human-rights organizations sent representatives, mostly from the relative safety of exile, to present evidence and lobby for a rapporteur. They believed that this appointment not only would document the steady deterioration of conditions but also was one of the only mechanisms that could promote accountability and curb future abuses.

The official report to the commission by the director of the past year's advisory services supported the bulk of the Guatemalan opposition's contentions. It noted an increasing pattern of human-rights abuses, including torture, summary executions and disappearances, and concluded that the Guatemalan government "lives in fear, a prisoner of forces it cannot control."

Several days before the reclassification resolution was to be introduced, a Guatemalan national who was on night guard duty at the Swedish Embassy in Guatemala was brutally stabbed, shot and mutilated. The Swedes interpreted the assassination as an attempt to influence the vote and punish them for their leadership in calling for condemnation of Guatemalan government and military terror. One Swedish diplomat confided that several Swedish diplomats had received threats from death squads linked to the Guatemalan military.

The official Guatemalan delegation, which included several high-ranking military personnel, refused to comment on these incidents and lobbied hard against a reclassification. Guatemala, they argued, is "a fragile democracy," and as such deserves patience and temporary impunity. Public censure would only strengthen the "anti-democratic forces" that challenge the power and legitimacy of the elected government.

Thus, in one broad stroke, all opposition groups—from mothers against disappearances to armed insurgencies—are transformed into enemies of democracy incarnate. Unnoted is the trend in Central and South America of using demonstration elections conducted under conditions of systemic intimidation, frequent disappearances, violent repression of the popular sector and threat of assassination of candidates and their allies to shield and validate repression.

Although they privately decried the extent of Guatemalan abuses and felt that its excesses brought unwanted attention to the human-rights situation of the region as a whole, the Latin American bloc—except Cuba and Nicaragua—rallied behind Guatemala. Many bloc nations were vulnerable to similar charges. By protecting

Continued on page 22

EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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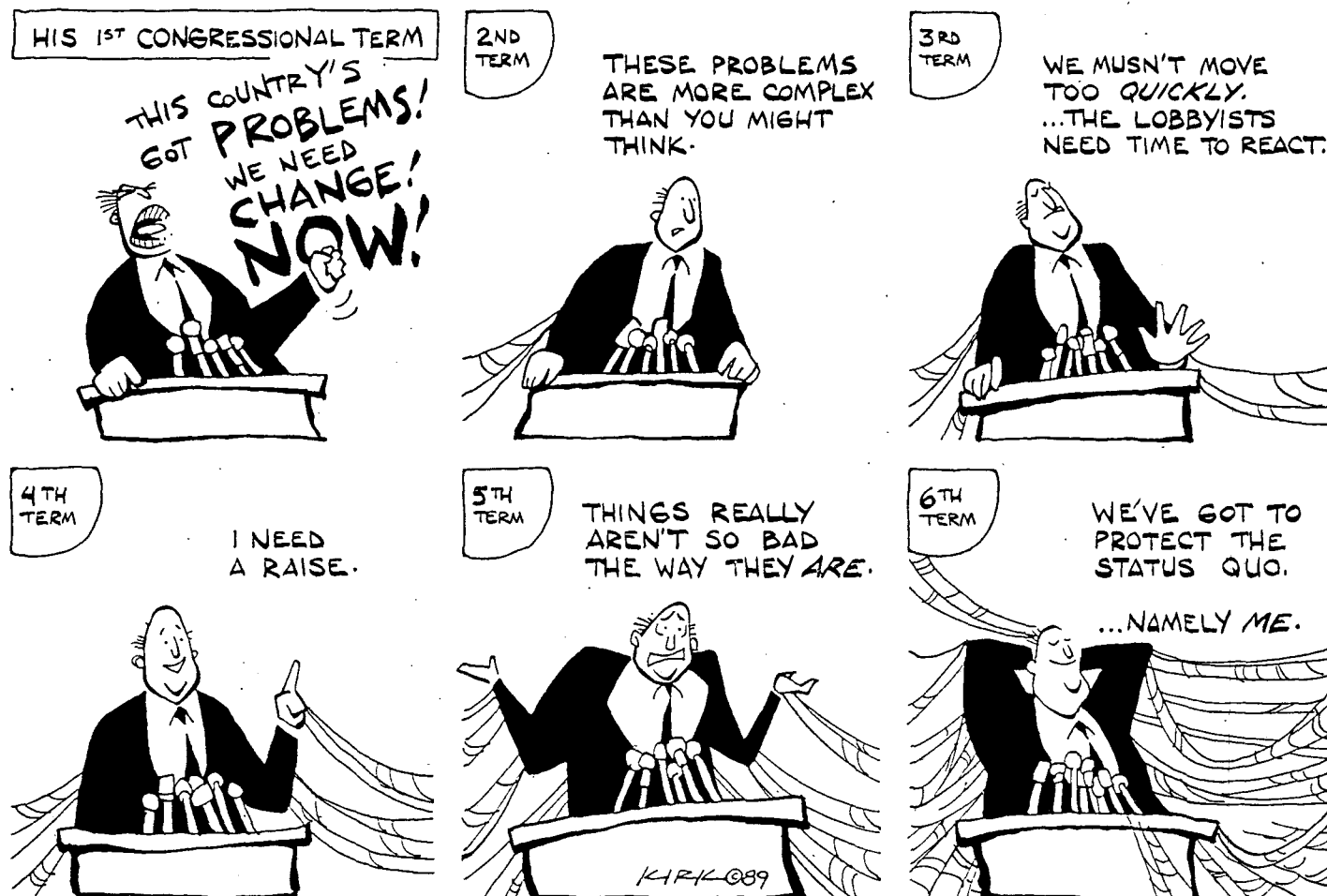
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Kirk Anderson

Politicians internalize their corruption

Our politics has always had its share of corruption. In 1908, for example, when the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens went to Boston to write about its government, he found its corruption "so like other cities" that he had difficulty writing about it. Boston confirmed what Steffens had come to suspect: in our society, "business and politics must be one; it was natural, inevitable, and—possibly—right that business should—by bribery, corruption or somehow—get and be the government."

After seeing Boston, Steffens finally tired of exposing the bribing of public officials in the hope of ending corruption. Instead, he hoped his muckraking would simply help end all the hypocrisy. He wanted to get respectable businessmen to admit that corruption of government was their way of life. His aim was to "make it impossible for [business leaders] to be crooks and not know it" and thus to force them to examine the contradiction in their lives. Only then, he believed, could Americans confront the destruction of democracy and its replacement with the plutocracy of corporate America.

Almost no one, of course, took Steffens' advice. Instead, the more obvious ways of corrupting public life, the glaring contradictions between the ideology of democracy and the practice of American politics, were gradually phased out—even eventually in Chicago—only to be replaced by legal ways of buying public officials and a public ideology that conflates the interests of private business with those of the public.

Two bills now before Congress illustrate how thoroughly private interests have come to supplant public interests and the way in which our politicians, as well as the media, identify ideologically with those who finance their campaigns rather than with those they nominally represent.

First, the Clean Air Act has been converted from a bill to protect the environment and the health of the American people into a bill to protect corporate polluters who contribute heavily to friendly members of Congress (see pages 11 and 16). A recent headline in the *Chicago Tribune* inadvertently underlined this point: "In crafting the clean air bill, senators take care of their own."

The *Tribune* article went on to explain: "When the chairman of the Senate environment committee [Quentin Burdick (D-ND)] put the finishing touches on the clean air bill, he took extra care in dealing with the five worst-polluting power plants in his state: he exempted them from the bill." But this statement of fact was then made to conform to the newspaper's ideology as it related that several other senators were also given "fixes" for their "states" rather than their corporate sponsors. Similarly, an aide to Senate Republican leader Bob Dole (R-KS), in defending the bill's exemption of most toxic chemicals used by farmers, claimed that the senator was "going to do everything [he] can for clean air but at the same time watch out for the interests of [his] state." And so it went. Steel corporations, utilities, incinerators and others all benefited from a process described benignly by the *Tribune* as "Clean air is good for the country but home-state interests come first."

In fact, however, it was the financial backers of our senators, not the home states, that came first in what Richard Ayres of the National Clean Air Coalition called a "special-interest feeding frenzy." In North Dakota, where the five polluting power plants were exempted, home-state interests came last, just as in Florida it was its citizens whose health came last so that incinerators could be spared the expense of cleaning the air.

The second bill is of a different nature—a package of changes in the civil-rights law made necessary by a series of Supreme Court decisions undermining congressional intent. In one ruling, the Court held that the 1866 civil-rights law governing the right to make contracts did not create a right to be free from on-the-job harassment. Four other rulings limited the scope of the two key laws barring employment discrimination: the 1866 law and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Trade groups oppose this bill because a strong civil-rights law would lead to expensive lawsuits and damage awards for discrimination. They also want to avoid discrimination suits that they see as a challenge to management's prerogatives in hiring and firing. And, of course, President Bush has taken their side and threatens to veto the bill, while Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) argues that the country doesn't need "to overhaul the legal system to insure equality."

What this means, however, is that insuring equality of employees' rights is clearly less important to our public servants than protecting employers' power. Or, as in the case of the Clean Air Act, the needs of corporate enterprise come first and those of the people take the hindmost.

LETTERS

Chronic seizure

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT YOU EDITORIALIZED about Lithuania as superficially as the *Miami Herald*.

If the Baltic States were "seized illegally" in 1940 by the Soviets, the same Baltic States were "stolen illegally" from Russia following World War I. Lithuania had been part of the Russian empire since 1772. The whole area had been occupied by the Germans during World War I. Following the German defeat and the civil war going on in Russia, the Allies thought it was a good time to break up Russia. They did their invasion in Siberia and left it to the hostile Baltic States to grab off all they could. As most of them sided with Hitler in World War II, you can't blame the Soviets for trying to get back what they could.

The tragedy is that the Baltic revolts are only a small part of the worldwide strife of hundreds of groups that differ from the parent country in ethnic, religious or language elements. These are fast becoming the wars of the '90s. Just pull out any foreign map and you can find the most bitter, malicious and killing wars over all continents. Currently the United States is the rare exception, but with Hispanic enclaves building up all over our country we could join the strife.

In the meantime, let's hope Mikhail Gorbachov's troubles aren't multiplied by Bush's meddling. It would be sad to start the Cold War all over again just so some "ethnic" wins what he thinks is freedom. That is, freedom to kill or be killed for what?

William M. Wilkerson
Florida City, Fla.

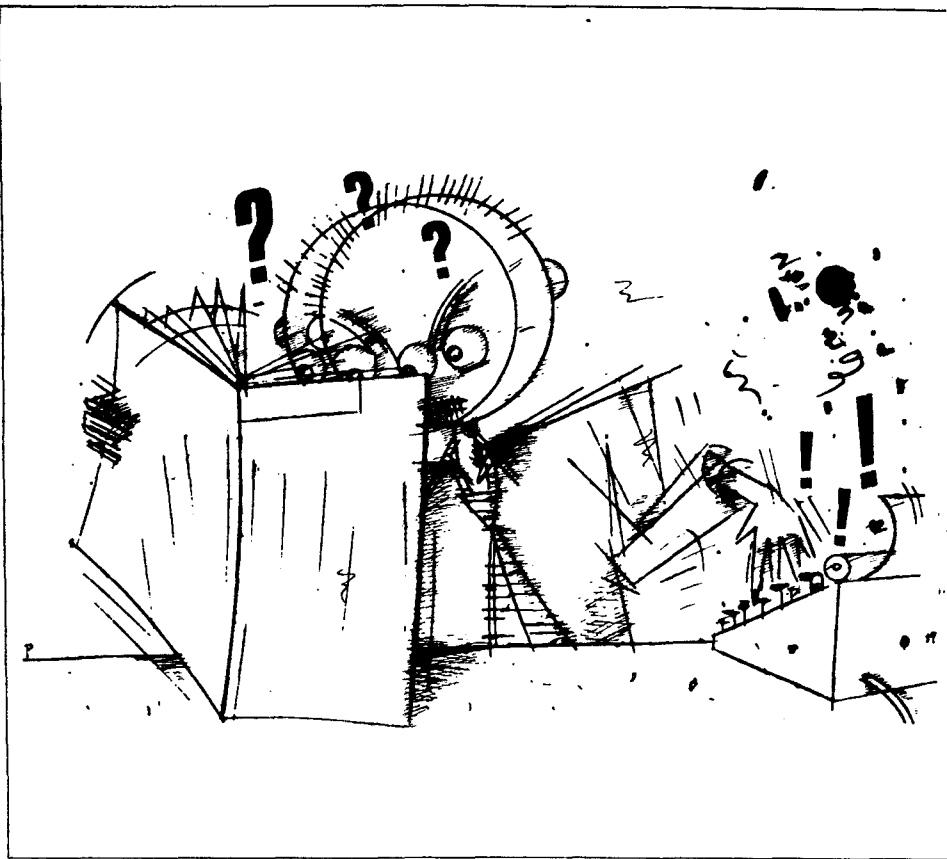
Socially irresponsible

I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY DISAPPOINTMENT over Jeff Balch's pitch for *Shopping for a Better World* (JTT, March 14). As Balch acknowledges, *Shopping for a Better World* "severely simplifies" complex environmental and community issues.

What Balch doesn't mention is that the realm of labor relations is virtually ignored. What if a company has a woman on its board of directors while simultaneously acting to prevent its largely female workforce from unionizing? *Shopping for a Better World* would rate such a company high on women's advancement, but would you?

This is not a hypothetical example. Consider a company like Sara Lee. *Shopping for a Better World* gives the company high ratings in every category of corporate citizenship except one (doing business in South Africa). *Shopping for a Better World* would have you believe that, at least in this country, Sara Lee is a good corporate citizen. But the booklet doesn't tell us that Sara Lee's Hanes subsidiary waged a long and bitter struggle against the unionization efforts of its low-wage workforce. On top of that, workers in both the Hanes division and in the Sara Lee bakery division suffer from high rates of carpal-tunnel syndrome and other repetitive-trauma disorders.

Moreover, while *Shopping for a Better World* rates Sara Lee high on community outreach, how does that square with their apparent decision to close a Deerfield, Ill., plant, throwing hundreds out of work, or the company's recent actions to force a strike in New Hampton, Iowa, where they are the dominant employer in town?



There is something dangerous about this "quick and easy" guide to socially responsible shopping. The only thing worse than ignorance is thinking that you know something you don't know. Most corporations are not socially responsible. The entire notion of a guide that helps you pick and choose among oil companies borders on the absurd. The real way to shop for a better world is to cut down on our consumption of fossil fuels, not to drive home from the gas station feeling satisfied because the company you bought gas from is "socially responsible."

Andrew Strom
Hyannis, Mass.

Uninduced

SALIM MUWAKKIL'S ARTICLE (JTT, APRIL 11) WAS principally devoted to persuading readers that Rep. Gus Savage (D-IL) did not in fact make public anti-Semitic remarks. Since Savage's remarks were unambiguously anti-Semitic, Muwakkil's arguments would have been unavailing were he to quote the remarks. So he didn't. And the editors didn't either.

Muwakkil's unscholarly arguments are, unfortunately, too typical of your publication to induce me to resubscribe.

Barry Blyveis
Columbia, Md.

Some milk is good milk

IN AN ARTICLE I WROTE FOR *IN THESE TIMES*, "Farmers and activists unite to keep cows drug-free" (Feb. 28), you chose an unfortunate and inaccurate subhead for one section. I refer to the heading above the article's concluding paragraphs—"No milk is good milk." Nothing in the article substantiated such a false and alarming phrase, and I certainly would never have used it. In fact, the subhead appears unrelated to anything that follows.

Please consider that, as noted at the end of the article, I wrote as communications coordinator for the National Family Farm Coalition and was attempting especially to convey family dairy farmers' point of view regarding what they see as an unneeded and potentially destructive additive product. The last thing I or they could have hoped for in this attempt is that a negative message about milk in general would be delivered. As the article's authoritative sources pointed out, milk is highly tested and regulated in this country and remains safe and wholesome.

Farmers more than anyone want to keep it that way. That's why we're working with environmental, consumer and animal-protection advocates to defeat synthetic BGH, which is as yet unapproved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Drink milk. It's good for you.

Brian Ahlberg
Washington, D.C.

The far side

IN LATE NOVEMBER 1989, CONGRESS APPROVED and President Bush signed a new foreign-aid appropriations bill calling for transferring to foreign governments \$14.6 billion during the current fiscal year.

This huge giveaway comes at a time when the federal government continues to operate at enormous deficits. While we are being taxed to provide billions for the governments of other nations, our leaders are deceitfully covering up the true size of the deficit. Both former Congressional Budget Director Alice Rivlin and current Comptroller General Charles Bowsher insist that the deficit is exceeding \$200 billion per year—twice what the administration is telling us.

This single foreign-aid appropriation is only one part of all the money we give away. I have been a local leader of the John Birch Society for many years and would like to point out that none of these transfers of money is authorized by the Constitution. They should all be terminated. We fund the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and lots of other international funds. We even pay for the defense of Germany, Japan and South Korea, which is a form of foreign aid. These nations can and should take care of themselves.

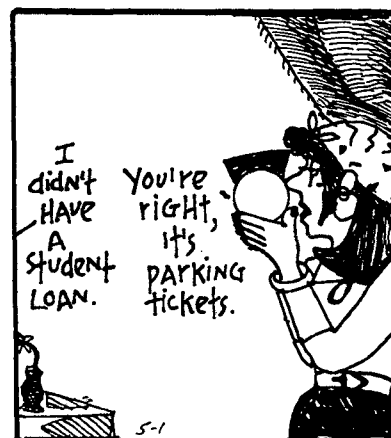
What has foreign aid bought for America? It's almost a total disaster. Besides speeding our nation toward bankruptcy, foreign aid has led to America being despised by the peoples of most of the nations of the world. They know that our dollars have been used to keep tyrants in power (Gorbachov in the USSR, Jaruzelski in Poland), destroy good leaders (the shah in Iran, Somoza in Nicaragua) and force some wasteful and ill-conceived programs (agrarian reform in South Vietnam and now in El Salvador). We have also built bureaucracies nearly everywhere, lined the pockets of thieves (Noriega, Ortega, Ceausescu), and even fueled the war-making capabilities of both sides in several regional conflicts (Arab-Israeli, Southeast Asia).

The sooner that we, the American people, demand an end to all foreign aid, the better off we'll be and the respect that our nation once enjoyed all over the the Earth will begin to return.

Bruce Taber
Kansas, Ill.

Editor's note: Please keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

By Richard Grossman

THE "CLEAN AIR" BILLS THAT THE SENATE passed early this month and that the House is now considering masquerade as public-health protection. In fact, they legalize increased poisoning by substituting industries' own pollution-control technologies for public-health standards. If these bills become law, citizens now struggling to protect their communities will have to wait until the next century for "health" to be a criterion for industrial policy.

These are anti-democratic and people-poisoning bills. They not only demonstrate how powerful the auto, chemical, petroleum, agribusiness, military, steel and utility industries have become but also reveal the unwillingness of national environmental organizations to demand a society not based upon poisons and destruction.

One would not know this from the president ("I am an environmentalist"); from Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell ("The American people want action, they demand action and they are right."); from press coverage ("A historic crackdown on air pollutants"—*Boston Globe*; "Industries dismayed"—*New York Times*; "A sweeping clean air bill ... orders industry to eliminate airborne toxics."—*USA Today*); or from environmental groups lobbying for crumbs despite secret deals and closed doors that even Clear Air Coalition Director Richard Ayres called "atrocious."

No doubt about it: Americans know that our air is severely hazardous to human health. The chemical industry produces more than 500 billion pounds of "products" each year and dumps almost the same amount as "waste." Chemical production is doubling every eight years. More than 750 million pounds of pesticides are sprayed annually. The 1977 deadlines for carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and ozone were pushed back to 1982, and then to 1987, and still have not been met. According to Barry Commoner, there has been "no statistically significant change in annual emission of particulates, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide" since 1982.

Reporting on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union on April 8, the *New York Times* said that the polluting practices there "seem all the more ruthless because they increased at a time when their dire consequences were already known." But this is no less true for the U.S.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), through Republican and Democratic administrations, has been accountable only to the president, not to the American people. Law enforcement has never been its major preoccupation. As David R. Wooley, executive director of the Center for Environmental Legal Education at Pace University, writes, "If 20 years of experience under the Clean Air Act teaches us anything, it is that the EPA cannot be relied upon to carry out the act unless Congress' commands are expressed in clear mandatory language backed up by an effective judicial remedy against agency inaction." Clean Air Act case law since 1980, Wooley reports, "is filled with dozens of unsuccessful attempts by states and citizen groups to compel the EPA to comply with unequivocal commands in the act."

The 1970 Clean Air Act, according to former Sen. Ed Muskie (D-ME), one of the

Cleaning the air gives way to protecting profits

act's authors, "was premised on a new and basic public-policy tenet: that the federal government has a responsibility to assure that the health of the public is protected from the effects of air pollution." Not that the act and its 1977 amendments were ever adequately enforced. But they did mandate that protecting public health "with an ample margin of safety" was the law of the land. And they did provide us some tools to defend our communities against industry and government complicity.

Citizen action: In recent years, many thousands of community-based groups have organized to stop the poisoning, to render the poisoners liable, to get care for the afflicted. Initially, they turned to the EPA and the Justice Department for help. But they quickly discovered that these agencies preferred to run interference for the poisoners and destroyers, so they developed their own independent strategies. The current legislation is designed to undermine these citizen groups.

The bills do not call for new technologies. They do not require the polluters to stop producing poisons—or even to stop polluting—and thus do not require industry to phase out any of the most persistent deadly chemicals. Instead they invite us to spend this decade dickering with the EPA and industry over what are the "best" emission controls for each pollutant and trying to get industry to install, operate and maintain these technologies correctly. Once this is achieved, the EPA administrator is called upon to inquire if there is a need for further "risk assessment." If he concludes there is, he must conduct such an assessment, after which the agency must decide how much risk is "acceptable," and then set and enforce emission standards accordingly. Of course, since the steel industry has already obtained from Congress a 30-year extension on meeting health standards from cancer-causing coke-oven emissions, the EPA administrator may choose to be helpful to other industries as well.

The Waxman bill in the House (the best of the sorry lot), calls for technology controls to be phased in over two to eight years and then for health standards to be phased in—with extensions available to the poisoners upon request. So it will be at least 13 to 19 years before these health standards are even on the agenda. And do not think for a moment that the polluters will accept these health standards lying down: their past record indicates that they will appeal to the president, flood the EPA with their own studies, go to court, threaten to shut down and otherwise whine for as long as possible.

And now, the really bad news: The result is that it will be, at best, the year 2003 before this law will permit citizens to have legal standing in air-poisoning prevention based on the goal of ending the killing of people, plants and animals. The only real force today for environmental protection—locally based citizen groups—will be restrained for a generation, limited to arguing with industry and government over setting and enforcing industry's own "best" technology standards.

For autos and power plants, health also is not on the table. Tail-pipe standards are fixed until the "second tier" deadlines—also technology-based—kick in around the year 2000. (The second-tier standards have been substantially weakened in all the bills.) This is despite general acknowledgment that there will be so many more internal-combustion engines on so many more roads by the year 2000 that the air will be fouler than it is today even with these standards. Los Angeles was given an extension on ozone until 2010, and other major cities like Chicago, Houston, New York and Philadelphia until 2005—unless the EPA chooses to declare cleanup efforts too costly and to extend the deadlines even more.

The acid-rain sections mandate certain reductions in electric-power plant emissions. But they introduce the brilliant idea of selling and buying what Congress has chosen to call "offsets," or pollution rights. In other words, a utility that is spewing less than a certain amount of poisons can sell its "rights" to more spewing to another utility, thereby ensuring more emissions than they are technologically capable of controlling. Given that power plants producing electricity waste two-thirds of their heat—and waste more in electrical transmission—just "controlling" some of the current emissions, while laudable, hardly addresses the real challenge: using less energy by being more efficient and moving into solar power.

In 1969, our legislators on the floor of Congress talked about phasing in alternatives to the internal-combustion engine, about standing up to the power of the auto industry, about zero pollution, ample margins of safety, citizen empowerment, land-use planning, mass transit, energy conservation. In 1990, they do not talk about stopping poisoning at its sources. They refuse to take timid steps toward mandating conservation and moving to solar, to require cars that get 100 miles per gallon by the end of the century and to mandate recycling.

Under the Senate bill, citizen groups lose their legal rights until 2003.

They do not acknowledge how much job blackmail is being used by industries and government agencies to intimidate workers and communities. They do not provide any economic or political protections for people under the thumbs of unscrupulous poisoners and employers.

Not only have they refused to give citizens the resources and tools to protect themselves, they have also denied us the ability to stand up for public health until yet another generation of our children has been thoroughly poisoned.

Who believes that our chances of stopping the poisoners in 2005 will be any better than today? We have seen over the past decade how the poisoners, grown fabulously wealthy from their dirty work, have taken over the regulatory agencies, con-

fused and intimidated the press and purchased our politicians for a song.

Can't be bothered: I joined a group of college students who had come to Washington, D.C., from all over the country to rally for clean air. The Student Environmental Action Coalition, which was coordinating the event, had made appointments for the students with their congressional representatives in advance. Only about half a dozen of the more than 400 students actually got to meet with Congress members. But whether they met with them or their staff, the students were patronized: not only were they just students but they were calling for zero emissions, phaseouts and bans, no new poisons, a superfund for workers—the necessary steps, but ones that Congress is terrified of taking.

After a spirited rally on the Capitol steps, the delegation moved to the House, where Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) was convening his committee on energy and environment. Congress members came and went. Presidential timber lumbered by. But the doors of this committee never opened up to the students. No elected official stopped to talk, to ask why they were there, to solicit their views.

After a few hours, the students began to sing. And they chanted: "We want in. We want in."

The Congress of the United States of America responded by summoning police reinforcements. About 25 new police officers arrived, hands on their holsters, not a smile in the bunch.

So that's where things stand today. It appears that all the principal players—the White House, Congress, the polluters, the national environmental organizations—want and need a bill they can call "clean air" more than they want clean air or an empowered citizenry. As long as they can get the public to believe these bills are about clean air, they will be able to enact anti-democratic and poisoning legislation in the name of the environment.

It would be better to have no new laws today than these laws. And given how strong the polluters are, we need to consider strategies that do not bring us begging to Congress. After all, the Berlin Wall did not come down because of a piece of legislation.

It is time for the Clean Air Coalition to denounce these bills and the atrocious legislative process that created them. If these bills are going to pass anyway, better that they pass over the clear and strenuous objections of the coalition and of people everywhere.

There is still time to stop these bills from becoming law. Many members of the Clean Air Coalition are thinking about condemning these bills and starting over with national educating and organizing. Earth Day Chairman Denis Hayes has labeled the bills "gutless."

We must stop this fraud, this legalization of poisoning. For what the students who serenaded Dingell and his comrades in grime in the halls outside his committee room sang is sad but true: "This air is your air, this air is my air/ People are dying for lack of clean air/ George Bush has sold out, Congress has compromised/ Our air is owned by industry."

Richard Grossman is publisher of the *Wrenching Debate Gazette*, Somerville, Mass.

Piggies at market: The Brazilian paradigm

Privatization, launched in the First World by Margaret Thatcher and her British team of "free market" theocrats, is now raging through Latin America and Eastern Europe, at precisely the moment Thatcher's popularity plummets to record lows in the United Kingdom and Britain's economic "revival" turns out to be hollow.

From Mexico to Argentina to Poland, economists trained in the United States are now pushing through drastic deflationary onslaughts on old structures of state ownership and employment, on subsidies and public patronage, and even on private assets.

The "free market" onslaught was promoted in its most disastrously naked guise in Bolivia, where Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs, now on retainer in Poland and Czechoslovakia, urged a scorched-earth assault on hyperinflation. Under his direction, the state simply closed down, with about half the labor force turned out on the street and much significant economic activity ceasing altogether. Inflation stopped, but so did everything else, and soon Bolivia's government was urgently seeking advice elsewhere on how to get things going again. The Poles should take notice of this sorry tale.

A rather more ominous story is unfolding in Brazil, which, in contrast to the Bolivian economy sustained mostly by coca cultivation, is the eighth largest in the world.

In December, at the climax of a desperately tight race between the socialist Workers Party candidate, Lula, and the former governor of Alagoas, Fernando Collor de Mello, victory was snatched by Collor, who had been denouncing state corruption and who had seized some of Lula's lightning by a populist message to Brazil's millions of homeless, abandoned and desperately poor.

No sooner had Collor taken office in March than he announced a savage program of retrenchment and deflation. His plan entailed one of the most abrupt attempts at centralization of power in political memory, designed to give Collor and his advisers discretionary powers over state and private assets undreamed of by the military regime that had controlled Brazil for a generation.

Collor's deflationary plan, enacted on March 16, one day after he took office, was to freeze all bank accounts and to change the currency. All funds over \$1,000 would revert from the accounts in which they had been lodged to named accounts in Brazil's Central Bank, where they would remain for eighteen months and then be paid back to

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

their holders in twelve monthly installments, thus tying up the confiscated funds for over two years.

Whom did this confiscation affect? Most bank accounts are held by Brazil's less wealthy—shopkeepers, unionized laborers, cab drivers, small businessmen, etc. Those with more cash generally invested in Brazil's "overnight" market in speculative bonds and currencies that yielded rates well above inflation. Virtually all large corporate groups held their millions in the "overnight" or overseas.

Collor and his economic team froze the "overnight" in a manner quite different from the confiscation of checking and savings accounts. Twenty percent of the assets in a given "overnight" account could be reclaimed, while 80 percent would be confiscated into the Central Bank for eighteen months. As the Brazilian economy went into shock and prices crashed, those with any cash at all—notably the 20 percent available to "overnight" account holders—were in a relatively good situation to take advantage of such opportunities as a stock market that lost 60 percent of its value or to purchase state enterprises for sale at 30 percent of their value.

Furthermore, people with substantial fortunes taken by the government are already making arrangements for getting their money back, negotiating for lucrative concessions and so forth. In this sense Collor's seizure of assets has amounted to economic hostage-taking to consolidate his political base.

The more than \$100 billion now concentrated in the Central Bank fund is at the disposition of Collor, who will decide which companies get their money back and on what terms. This of course creates a tremendous potential for corruption.

If Lula—or Chile's Allende—had tried such a program, the military would have moved at once, and the international press would have echoed with denunciations of "totalitarian" tactics. But no one who matters is mistaking Collor for a radical or someone who is more than rhetorically wedded to the dreams of Brazil's *descamisadas*.

Collor has also struck down barriers to foreign investment, permitting international investors to pick up tempting portions of Brazil's crumbling economic masonry, as well as mineral concessions, at bargain-basement prices. An unconfirmed report in the *Journal do Brasil* recently had Japanese investors agreeing to assume responsibility for Brazil's external debt in exchange for rights to all the gold reserves in the Amazon.

Simultaneously Collor has cleared away

restrictions on imports, which will further erode Brazil's domestic economy.

What has Collor's program meant in the short term? There have been huge layoffs, with more than 20,000 workers idled in less than a month. Up to 90 percent of the auto and machine capacity of the state of São Paulo—the economic core of Brazil—has closed down, and more than 10,000 government employees are soon to be laid off. Banks and businesses have failed by the dozen.

Well-publicized arrests of jewelers, supermarket and business executives, charged with various economic crimes, have burnished Collor's populist image, while the country spirals into depression and its assets are thrown on the international auction block. Collor's popularity is running at 75 percent approval. The little guy says he has the same bank balance—\$1000—as the richest man in Brazil, ignoring the matter of the "overnight." This popularity is terrorizing Brazil's Congress, which, with elections in the fall, is being compliant, with the fierce exception of the Workers Party.

Brazil's powerful unions, who led the assault against the military, now find themselves under direct threat. Their gains had been most palpable in the state-controlled steel and oil industries. But state corporations—notably Siderbras, the state's steel industry—will soon be for sale, with new and hostile ownership in view.

Collor's program amounts to a form of fascism: abrupt concentration of power in

the executive, personal control over allocation of resources in the economy, a scrim of populist rhetoric. When Brazil's most distinguished newspaper, the *Folha de São Paulo*, featured a picture of Collor in military rig, the newspaper's offices were invaded the next day and its directors seized by the military police, at which point the *Folha* featured a similar photograph of Mussolini.

Collor's economic strategy is reform by dismemberment, the model presently being essayed in Poland and nervously heralded earlier this week in Moscow by Gorbachov's economic adviser, Leonid Abalkin. The plan outlined by Abalkin and reported in the Western press on Tuesday similarly looks to the shutdown of state enterprises, untrammelled foreign investment, mass unemployment and the annulment of workers' rights as the only way forward. Call that fascism too, or perhaps Market Stalinism, with "market discipline" imposed by dictatorial fiat—the worst of both systems.

So the newly emerging world model is not the national "free market" but authoritarian capitalism as dreamed of by leaders from Santiago and Buenos Aires through London to Beijing. For Thatcher an answer came, violently, last week in the form of protest against the poll tax. For the leaders in Beijing, an answer came in Tiananmen Square. Gorbachov awaits the response of the Soviet working class. In Latin America, moving from military fascism to market fascism (or enduring both simultaneously), the fate of these strategies will similarly be settled in the streets.

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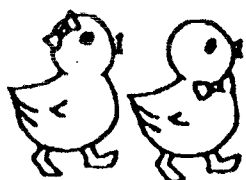
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I woke up this morning
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On the sunny side of the street
I'm the last jet pilot
With twenty-twenty vision
And mind bending power
On a mission from God
—The Screaming Blue Messiahs
"Four Engines Burning
(Over the U.S.A.)"

By Mark G. Judge

ACCORDING TO A RECENT MAC-Neil-Lehrer NewsHour, pop music Armageddon has arrived. Ten years after the Clash declared "Armageddon Time" MacNeil's "essayist" Penny Stallings' oddly bemused report noted the "bleakness" pervasive in pop these

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days. I guess Jim and Robin were feeling a touch arthritic and decided to send a correspondent to the rock'n'roll trenches, even if only to mouth dispatches from the Office of Propaganda. And what's the news from the front?

Well, if Stallings' essay proved anything, it's that her radio is jammed on the top 40. With the exception of Neil Young, the post-punk artists she chose to emphasize her misinformed point—we'll call them the Four Horsemen—are without exceptions paragons of the kind of sonorous, heavy-marketing, high-school-reunion-theme drivel that the late Lester Bangs once referred to as "air spray." The list reads like the CD collection at a Georgetown cocktail party for the Young Americans for Freedom: Billy Joel, Don Henley, Tracy Chapman and Phil Collins. (I'm willing to accept the possibility that Phil Collins is the Antichrist, but he sure as hell isn't writing music like it.)

Taken individually, Tracy Chapman is the least offensive. (Her most caustic criticism thus far came from writer Mark Jenkins: "This revolution won't only be televised; it'll be CD'd too.") She's made clear in interviews and with the single "Born to Fight" that she's uncomfortable with her whitewashing by the mainstream media, and her origins as urban troubador are genuine.

Cartoon rock: The others don't get off so easily. Don Henley will go down in history as the frontman of the Eagles, the most boring band in the history of recorded music. He couldn't get a reaction out of Daffy Duck. Phil Collins will be remembered as the leader of the second most boring band in history, Genesis. He looks like Elmer Fudd. Both of them write pathologically dull songs that have lately reached oppressive levels of hubris. But they have yet to reach the pretentious heights of their comrade-in-alarm, Billy "I'm the Italian Pat Boone" Joel, the Wiley Coyote of the bunch. Arrogant, doltish, perpetually unaccom-

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Bill Carter of the Screaming Blue Messiahs: something more than cartoon rock.

Jagged rocks out of the mainstream

plished, Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire"—noted in Stallings' story—is the worst single in years. Basically, the song cascades through a litany of historical references and pop icons, spanning a period of late-20th-century American culture that is, of course, self-referential for the ego-maniacal Joel.

I'd like to quote the lyrics accurately but I can't, 'cause I'd rather break my own arm than buy the single. But I'm sure, with the relentless media saturation surrounding the hit single, that you've all heard it anyway. He does a New Yawk white-bread rap, simply reciting names and events: Joe DiMaggio, *Catcher in the Rye*, Joe McCarthy, Korea, Vietnam, Watergate, etc., then comes up with the refrain "We didn't start the fire/ It was always burnin' since the world's been turnin'."

What does this mean? It means Billy's been writing lyrics while on the crapper, that's what. *We didn't start the fire*. In other words, hey, man, this shit's been goin' on forever, man, and we're not responsible, man; it's just the nature of the beast. Bullshit. There were people behind and responsible for the Korean War, the House Committee on Un-American Activities—incoherent maniacs like Joel, probably—as well as the Yankees and Holden Caulfield. And Jesus—if we didn't start the fire that devoured Southeast Asia, who did?

Ultimately, rock'n'roll that conjures images of the violent destruction of a person, country or planet is widely shunned by timid radio programmers and journalists. Thus rap is continually snubbed (ever heard Public Enemy on the radio?), and the Clash's only stateside hit was the fluffy "Rock the Casba." So if you take your revelations seriously, turn the radio off and go down to your local record store for two recent releases that offer a chilling foretaste of hell: the Screaming Blue Messiahs' *Totally Religious* and Midnight Oil's *Blue Sky Mine*.

Screaming blues: *Totally Religious* sounds like a fatal car crash. Launching off with "Four Engines Burning (Over the USA)"—a *Doctor Strangelove* nightmare scrawled in craters by "the witchfinder general" who's "got four engines burning over your town"—the album is incessant mayhem from countdown to crash-down. Not that the music's sloppy; the Messiahs, a British trio headed by Bill Carter, maintain a taut, high-octane thrust, particularly on post-nuclear crunch punk like "Mega City 1," "Big Big Sky" and "Gunfight." Up until now the Messiahs have been jesters of chaos, particularly on their last release, *Bikini Red*, which had songs like "I Wanna Be a Flintstone" and "I Can Speak American." They were the Eddie Haskells of the underground, smart-alecky pranksters too

clever for their own good, who sounded like they would blow the roof off but sang about cartoons.

On *Totally Religious*, Carter—bald Bam-Bam if ever there was one—decides to get serious. While scream-along melodies are in shorter supply than on their first two albums (*Gun-Shy* and *Bikini Red*), lyrically it's their most accomplished to date. Consider "Wall of Shame," which ought to be played as a rebuttal every time "We Didn't Start the Fire" pipes in: "I used to be the wind in the Holocaust/Blowing through the dust of the souls that were lost/ The betrayer of all trust/ The holder of a fatal charm." In Carter's bleak world of rubble and steel, the blood-thirsty madmen have the upper hand and the streets are an inferno.

Totally Religious was recorded in Baltimore, and the sound of urban decay seeps off the tracks; victims are assaulted on the ground by cops and in the air by "nitro satellites." Hell, a fellow can't even get a drink, 'cause "it don't go down in this dumb town." That's from "All Gassed Up."

I'm willing to accept the possibility that musician Phil "Filler" Collins is the Antichrist, but he sure as hell isn't writing music like it.

the disc's only funny track, where you can't even leave your house without a hassle: "I took a little drive down the miracle mile/ Cop looked at me with the cutest smile/ Said get on the floor, pancake style/ I'm gonna take you downtown to cool off for a while." There's no hope at all. The record's final lyrics find Carter wailing, "I'm gonna be here the rest of my life" from his literal and metaphorical jail.

Midnight Oil's still burning:

The members of Australia's Midnight Oil also know that we're in hell but want something done about it now. They impressed critics with their 1988 breakthrough album *Diesel and Dust*, and it's hard to criticize them for getting preachy because they write great songs. The Oils seek some kind of pure, aboriginal nirvana, but the dream is constantly polluted by thugs and corporate fixers—like in "Blue Sky Mine," the new album's title track: "So I'm caught at the junction still waiting for medicine The sweat of my brow keeps feeding the engine Hope the crumbs in a pocket can keep me for another night And if the Blue Sky Mining company won't come to my rescue If the sugar refining company won't save me Who's gonna save me?" They wrap their despair in pretty melodies falling somewhere between heavy metal and pop, and the effect is one of forceful conviction. (Incidentally, Peter Garrett, Midnight Oil's singer/spokesman, is as bald as a cueball, just like the Messiahs' Bill Carter. Coincidence?)

Midnight Oil's specialty is the Rousing Anthem—you know, *Never Forget, Fight Back, Don't Give In*, etc. And they know who the enemy is. They've been writing ecologically conscious songs for years, and the line connecting environmental disaster and governmental malfeasance is drawn often on *Blue Sky Mine*.

"So you cut all the tall trees down," Garrett sings on "River Runs Red," "You poisoned the sky and the sea You've taken what's good from the ground/ And left precious little for me." There's a fervent urgency to the music reflective of the doom the leaders we elected have made for us, as well as an honest, anti-rock star empathy with the salt of the Earth—"Don't put me on your bedroom wall," Garrett admonishes in "King of the Mountain."

Like *Totally Religious*, *Blue Sky Mine* ends on a hopeless note with "Antarctica": "There must be one place left in the world/ Where the skin says it can breathe/ There's gotta be one place left in the world/ It's a solitude of distance and relief/ There's gotta be one place left in the world." That's why the Oils are screaming—if such a place does exist, you can be sure it won't be around for long. And if Armageddon is coming, it will be a fire very much of our own making.

Mark G. Judge is a writer living in the Washington, D.C. area.

Cry-Baby
Directed by John Waters

By Pat Aufderheide

A FEW RATS AND A GROSS-OUT French-kissing scene are about all there is in *Cry-Baby* to remind you that director John Waters (*Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, *Desperate Living*) was once dubbed the Prince of Puke. There's more to recall the sweet wholesomeness underlying the antics in his recent hit *Hairspray*.

But *Cry-Baby*, a spoof of teen-romance musicals, does cut noisily and happily through conventions. It makes cultural renegades its heroes, gives a fat raspberry to the primly correct and—what a bonus—rediscovers some of the most obscure '50s rhythm'n'blues and rock.

In the end, it balances uneasily between the gleefully slapdash Waters tradition and the glossy production values and sympathetic characters that come with big budgets and studio distribution.

The year is 1954, the place Baltimore (Waters' hometown and home base, the place he has celebrated as "Trashtown, USA, the Sleaziest City on Earth, the Hairdo Capital of the World"). High school "Squares" and "Drapes"—leather-jacketed hipsters—battle for, among other things, the heart of a good girl yearning to go bad.

Endless shenanigans: The good guys are the Drapes, led by Cry-Baby (teen idol Johnny Depp, familiar from *21 Jump Street*), the orphan who sheds but a single tear. A punky street-corner Elvis, he wants his love (Ani Locane, banally blonde star of the film *Los Angeles*) to make him "the happiest juvenile delinquent in Baltimore." Keeping him from his goal are his true love's etiquette-happy grandmother (Polly Bergen in a masterful bit of self-parody), a jealous straight boyfriend (sharp-eyed Stephen Mailer, Norman's son) and, of course, the police. Helping Cry-Baby along are his own grandmother (teeth-gnashing Susan Tyrell), his fan club led by his pregnant sister (Ricki Lake), a sullen sizzler (ex-porn star Traci Lords), a terrifying Drapette with a trim body and grotesque face (albino actress Kim McGuire) and an odd lot of bikers and petty criminals.

The shenanigans are endless (and ultimately exhausting), starting with the Squares' attack on the Drapes' party headquarters and proceeding through jail, court and a theme park. Each site acts as a stage for musical numbers that range from raunchy to ridiculous.

Enlivening the background are a host of minor characters played, appropriately, by minor celebrities, most of whom have already used up their 15 minutes of fame: rock star Iggy Pop, one-time heartthrob Troy Donahue, long-time Waters actress Mink Stole, one-time Warholite Joe Dallesandro, dancer Joey Heatherton, revolutionary heiress Patricia

Hearst and ex-suburban sitcom kid David Nelson.

The trouble with money: The fun in *Cry-Baby* is immediate. It's in the energy of the musical numbers, the absurdity of individual scenes, the cartoonish set design and the silly jokes on an adolescent genre and the times that spawned it. But despite its wit and spunk, the movie loses its momentum.

The film's own good looks sometimes work against it. Waters' earlier movies were unabashedly crude, which both distanced spectators from the fantasy-gore and permitted a free association with one's own anti-establishmentarian fantasies. The fantasy here is well crafted, from production design to costuming to cinematography, so it's harder to be horrified or teased into giggles and easier to sit back and demand that the movie also deliver plausible psychology and character.

The young lovers—parodies of fashion innocence from another era—therefore seem particularly banal pretty-faces, undistinguished from

John Waters' enduring social theme has been the way populist energy transforms commodity culture into popular culture.

their square peers except by a quirky choice of friends, clothing and music. True, the movie is dotted with oddballs who uphold the Waters tradition of wanting freedom, not power. They're not the main act, though.

But asking for psychological plausibility is particularly unfair to the best in a John Waters film (as opposed, say, to a Johnny Depp vehicle). The best of John Waters is never about plausible psychology—or plausible anything. It's about style and its coded relationship to morality. No wonder all the characters in *Cry-Baby* are cartoonish caricatures: they're referents to media icons. It's the style they choose—

Square or Drape—that marks their station and options.

For Waters, style is the road to the soul and humor the vehicle. He's the filmmaker who made semiotics sexy, who made conformity a fashion

FILM

crime, who boldly asserted that respectability was a social disease of commodity culture.

Pathological desires: Moral themes run through all his work. His enemies are the guardians of respectability, those champions of the most anonymous and standardized in commodity culture. Behind their blandly proper exteriors lie patho-

logical desires far outreaching the idiosyncrasies and passions of his more superficially anti-social heroes.

His enduring social theme has been the way populist energy transforms commodity culture into popular culture. John Waters genuinely respects and admires the choices that go into assembling a unique personal identity off K mart racks and thrift-store piles. Indeed, only someone with a lavish affection for those choices could get away with poking such outrageous fun at the tacky and trashy.

In *Cry-Baby*, those themes still exist, but the stakes are lower. The bad guys are less diabolical, the good guys less strange, the fashion

codes less spontaneous, junky and idiosyncratic than in any other Waters extravaganza. Unlike *Hairspray*, fueled by its comic assault on racism, *Cry-Baby's* social edge is blunted. Teen-romance movies are not much of a target for scorn as sophisticated as Waters'.

Even so, there are moments of trashy splendor, and the whole thing is suffused by an infectious good humor. At the least, the never-predictable *Cry-Baby* won't establish John Waters as a safe crossover item. It's got too much ragged rebelliousness to be turned into a neatly packaged entertainment commodity itself.

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Filmmaker John Waters: 'All my movies are very moral'

On a winter afternoon in John Waters' Baltimore living room—its scaled-down Tudor dignity desecrated by criminal memorabilia and plastic replicas of Japanese food—Waters talked about *Cry-Baby* and about his career manufacturing what he calls "good bad taste."

"Good bad taste is all about irony," says the tall, gracious man with warm brown eyes. "It's both repelled and attracted by bad taste: it laughs with it, not at it."

Cry-Baby, with its \$8 million budget and major studio distribution, celebrates "good bad taste" in a much lower key than Waters' earlier work. But that's not, he insists, because of industry pressures. Instead, take it as a sign of the mellowing of John Waters.

From the far side of 40, he says with urbanity, "I love getting old. I think it's hilarious that in some ways I've become part of the establishment. I'm a lot less angry now. I don't regret any of the wildness of my early days, but I think there'd be something wrong if I behaved like that now. You should have your identity crisis when you're young."

Although *Cry-Baby* lacks the shock value of Waters' post-adolescent comic-anger epics, it fits in the Waters film family, he explains.

"All my movies are very moral," Waters says. "The underdogs always win. The bitter people are punished, and people who are happy with themselves win. They're all about

wars between two groups of people, usually involving fashion, which signifies morals."

"It's part of a lifelong campaign against people telling you what to do with your own business."

Waters' shock-value screen fantasies have created a strange, if devoted, cult following. "People think I'm for mass murder, I'm for gore, that I like *Hustler*," he sighs. "Sometimes people write and tell me I've given them courage to do something I'd probably tell them not to do."

The real John Waters, he says, is a listener and observer, especially of what he politely terms "abnormal psychology." He's an avid reader of the crime page and a longtime addict of criminal trials ("the best theater in America, and it's free!").

His devotion to trials has left him with some unlikely friendships. He still, for instance, visits Charles "Tex" Watson, one of the Manson family, whose transformation Waters says "gives me complete faith in mankind." And he faithfully attended Patty Hearst's trial, although, as he later told her, he became convinced of her innocence only when he watched Paul Schrader's film *Patty Hearst*. Hearst happily accepted a role in *Cry-Baby* from the man who'd watched her trial for fun.

Waters' casting follows his appetite for the bizarre and his capacity to let others fascinate him. Waters effectively created Divine, and a film style to go with her. (Divine died—

suffocated in his own flesh—in 1988, and Waters doesn't intend to look for a substitute star-figure. "Some people are just irreplaceable," he says matter-of-factly.) He introduced Edith Massey (the "egg lady" in *Pink Flamingos*) and Ricki Lake, the cheerfully overweight star of *Hairspray*, to moviegoers. He's particularly gifted at finding the insecurities that wrack the fashion-haunted American woman and at creating female characters that give them vengeance on *Vogue*.

He explains his choices simply: "I look for personalities, people with a history. If people didn't have problems, I wouldn't hire them."

He does more than hire them—he adopts them. His film projects are as much the creation of ad hoc communities as they are products for the marketplace. If it's a community populated by often self-described freaks, it's also a safe haven.

"I think all directors are father figures," Waters says. "And I don't try to 'play' that role—I just am it."

Waters used to make movies for "people I'd want to have dinner with and make them laugh." Now he finds himself increasingly pitching his movies to the kind of people he wouldn't have dinner with—what he calls "shopping-mall people."

"I don't think people go to the movies to meet the people next door. On the other hand," Waters says with a characteristic chortle, "I can't think of a better group of neighbors."

—P.A.



Kim McGuire, Darren E. Burrows, Johnny Depp, Ricki Lake and Traci Lords are along for the ride in John Waters' rebellious romp.

Henry Garfunkel

By Sandy Primm

Eastern Europe invades Louisville

A HANDFUL OF EASTERN European revolutionaries turned this spring's 14th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays into a celebration of the stage's political as well as emotional power.

Squeezed into the Louisville festival's weekend schedule of seven new dramas, the guest European panel praised their national and local theaters as democracy's savior. Panel members all agreed that theater provided a vision of liberty, a chance for the public to hear what people wanted to say but could not legally.

The visitors received a standing ovation, an honor accorded just one of the new American plays, 2, a disturbing profile of Nazi Reichmarshal Hermann Goering. The generous treatment of Romulus Linney's 2 may not have been due entirely to its deft writing and acting—it just happened to be the last item on a bill of superlatives for most of the festival-goers.

Among the surprises offered up this year:

- The love triangle of a nurse, swan and milkman;
- A new play by Joyce Carol Oates dramatizing the benefits of vigorous, healthy fantasy;
- A celebration of the power of the American desert;
- Some of Henri Matisse's brightest canvases brought to life;
- The inside story of a women's bass-fishing tournament.

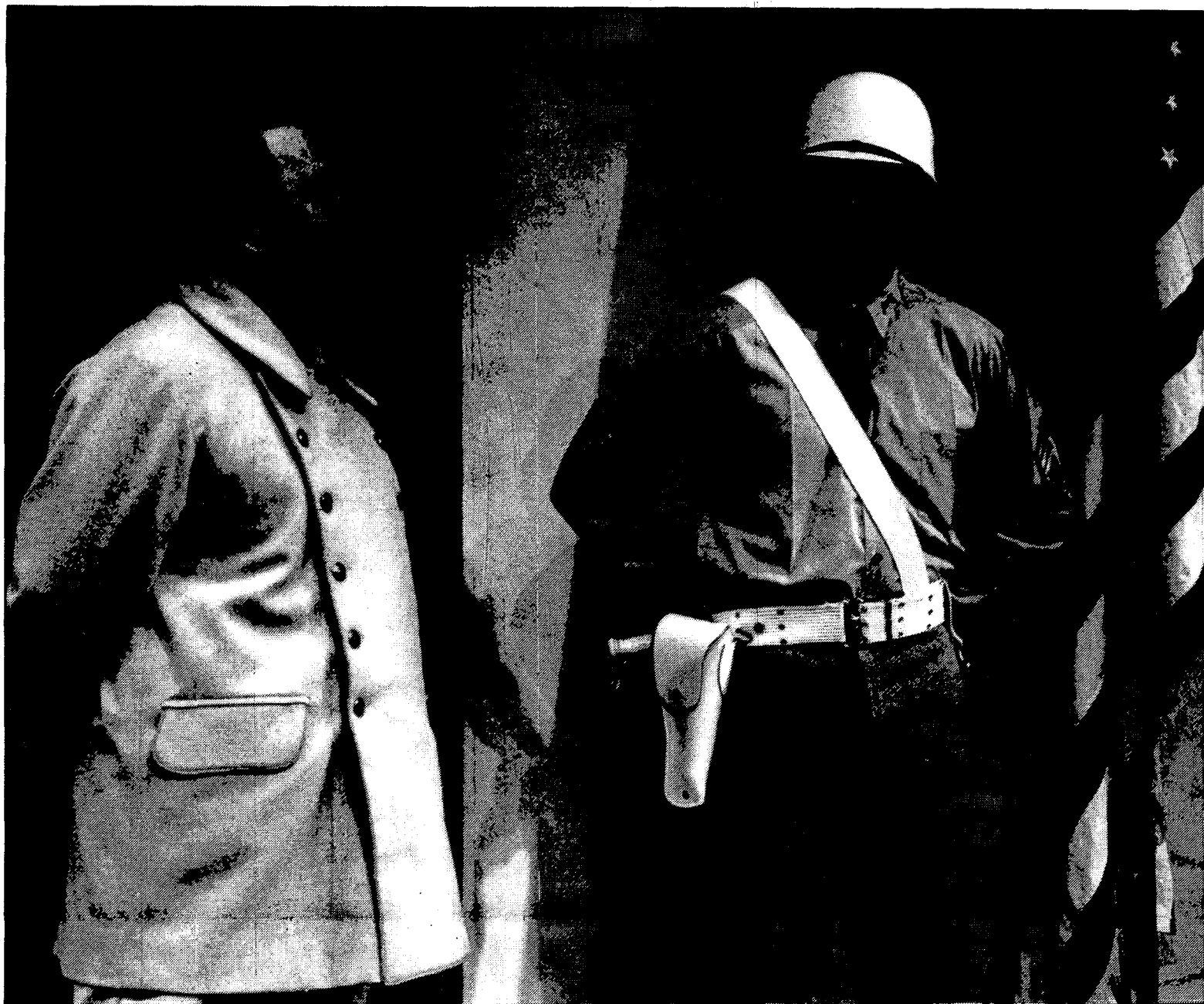
Helping make the Humana Festival unique is the energy of Jon Jory, producing director at the Actors Theatre of Louisville for 21 seasons and producer of some 500 plays here. The legion of community volunteers, numerous international visitors and the rapt attention of America's theater community for one weekend add to the festival's cachet.

"This is a unique event in America because the Actors Theatre of Louisville searches for work with broad appeal and produces everything themselves," said Linney, an author of three novels and 18 plays. His profile of Goering was one of two plays commissioned by the theater for the festival, another tradition.

Taking chances: Joyce Carol Oates' play was the other commissioned work this year. "I just hope the New York production will be as excellent as this was," she said after the performance. As a means of encouraging broad public interest in theater, Jory believes in commissioning writers not known for working in drama.

Previous efforts have been offered by such notables as Harry Crews, Jimmy Breslin and William F. Buckley Jr.—to mixed reviews. Few writers can make the transition to theater easily, some critics say, suggesting that the Humana Festival is best at spotlighting the work of emerging and undiscovered playwrights.

Among work first previewed at the



Springtime for Hitler: William Duff-Griffin and Percy Metcalf in Romulus Linney's Nazi-era drama, 2.

Louisville festival have been D.L. Coburn's *The Gin Game*, Arthur Kopit's recent *The Road to Nirvana*, early pieces by Marsha Norman and numerous short works by Lee Blessing, Athol Fugard, Beth Henley, Preston Jones, Lanford Wilson and many others.

This year, the Eastern European panel was as moving and often as witty as the scheduled plays. At one point a Yugoslav playwright took great delight in teasing Sergei Nikolayevich, editor of *Soviet Theatre* magazine in Moscow.

"Exactly which socialist countries are coming to the festival of socialist theater this year?" asked Zehra Kreho, an energetic Slav who stressed that her country is in Southern, not Eastern, Europe and is currently undergoing economic, not political, revolution.

"The name has been changed to the Moscow Festival," Nikolayevich said with a dignified smile.

That was as close as the panelists came to confrontation in the two-hour session. Most of this informal program between plays was devoted to a discussion of theater's relevance in the recent changes of power in the region.

"Theater people have been connected across the borders and could help one another," said Margaret

Semil, foreign editor and critic for the Warsaw-based *Dialog*. "Other writers had opportunities to publish clandestinely, but because theater is such a public art and under close government control, it was impossible for dramatists to do truly popular work. We had to do plays that would speak indirectly to the people. That's why *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was done so many times in Warsaw in recent years."

The catbird seat: Czechoslovakia's new president being the playwright Vaclav Havel and the Magic Lantern Theater in Prague being headquarters for last year's bloodless coup d'état, dramatists might be considered to be in the catbird seat. Yet, in a way, the opposite is the case, as theaters had enjoyed subsidies under the former governments.

The Polish, Hungarian and Romanian speakers all said that belt-tightening—known as "equal misery for all"—and competition for scarce public funding are likely to become the norm. Holger Teschke, dramatist at the Berliner Ensemble in East Germany, even joked that *The Sound of Music* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* might be the next big hits in East Berlin.

One new form of popular theater has evolved in Poland as a result

of continuing unrest—para-theater, which developed under martial law. "It's more like a happening," Semil said. "For example, word would be passed around to wear red to a public gathering, or to bring flowers to

THEATER

hand out at a militia formation. At a bar people would ask for a drink that called for a kind of alcohol no longer available. The idea is to be creative: endless provocation is answered by endless invention."

Asked about union organizing, Semil said a variety of activity is underway but more concern is being directed to finding ways to encourage patronage from the newly wealthy class in Poland. "We have plenty of rich people now," she noted. Also, both religious censorship and silencing by market pressures are of growing concern to many in the theater community.

"We have lots of new small theaters in Moscow now, but most interest is being shown in traditional Russian pieces being presented in new ways," said *Soviet Theatre's* Nikolayevich. "There are many new plays that aren't getting performed, and I'm sure we'll all be flooded with new documentary pieces about the recent past. The greatest theater in

Moscow now is on the streets and in the parliament." The other panelists nodded as if to acknowledge their nations' similar plights.

Past is wave of the future: History is the major trend in the plays offered this year, Jory noted in the festival playbill. But the treatment of the past differs widely.

Some 2,000 plays were submitted for review by the theater's literary department for this year's festival. Only dramatists with established agents may submit scripts for consideration, though the company does sponsor a 10-minute play competition open to all.

The Swan, by Elizabeth Egloff, a poet now focused on drama, took one long act to present the story of Bill, who has become swan-like in all but outward shape. William Youmans' utterly convincing portrayal of Bill left me certain that in his eating habits he prefers dabbling in a lake to sitting at a table.

Befriended by Dora, a nurse deep in an affair with Kevin the milkman, Bill is persuaded to wear clothes like the rest of us and control his propensity to utter snippets of poetry at unexpected moments. Kevin does his best to help Dora shape up Bill, but the task is too great. Will this play win a second staging, which some say is harder to come by than

a first? If there's an actor who may be half crane, heron or swan, this play will tickle most any audience. **The new No. 2:** 2 also requires an exceptional character actor. "We were so lucky to find William Duff-Griffin to play Goering," Linney said. "Thirty years ago I happened to read a novel about Goering, who was Hitler's No. 2 man. Last summer I finally had a chance to review recent research and write this play. Goering was a fascinating man."

Viewing this character study an American becomes thankful it was Adolf who called the shots, not Hermann. Goering comes across as a brilliant politician, capable of manipulating his guards as deftly as he did the Nuremberg Tribunal.

"World War II may be the last chance we have to study ourselves in global conflict," Linney said. "Research shows how close Hitler was to winning the war, especially if he had treated the Russian people differently. Many initially viewed the Germans as liberators from the Communists, but Hitler missed the message."

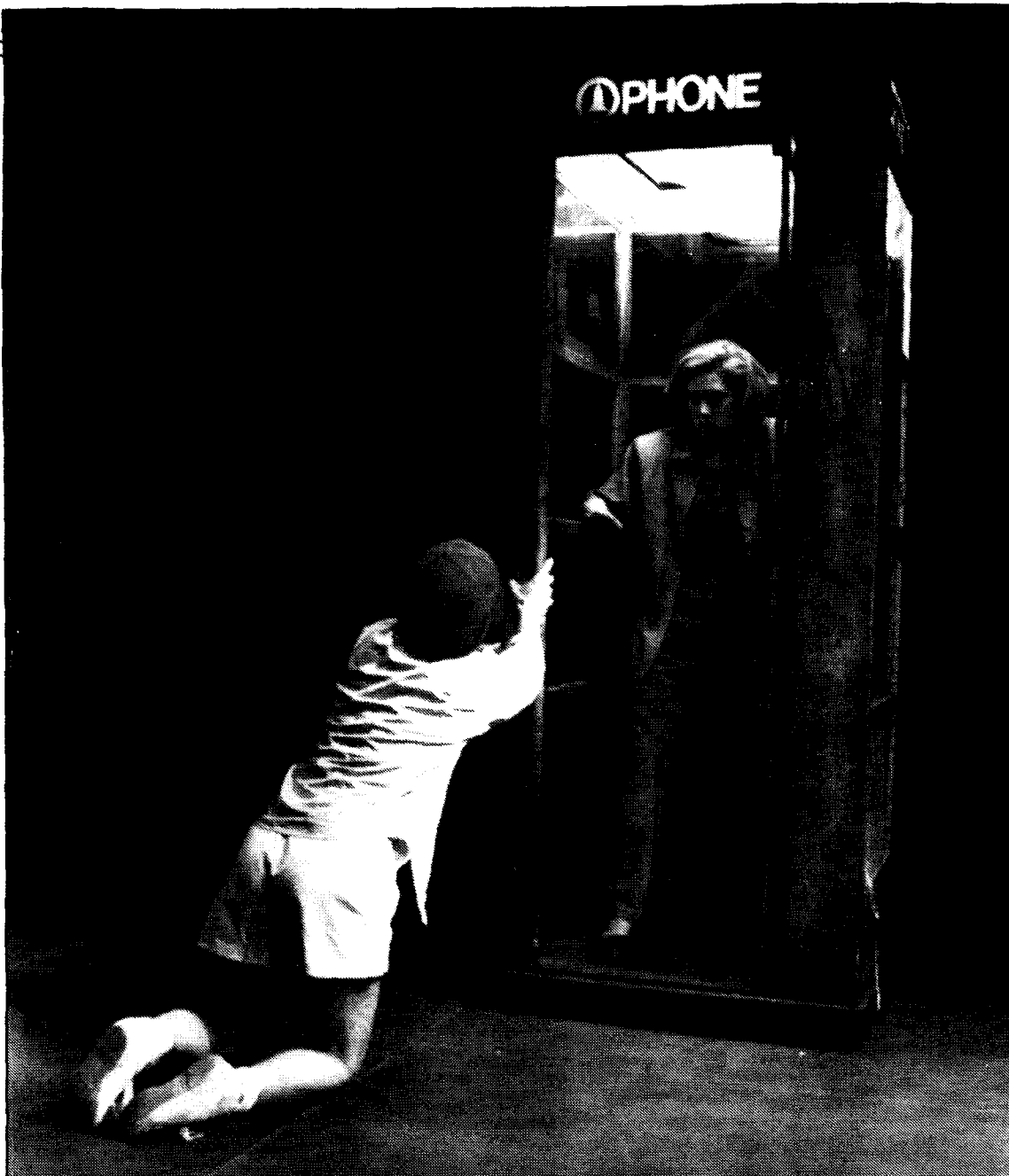
In addition to historical concerns, other plays at the festival focused on issues involving social or psychological control.

Joyce Carol Oates' *In Darkest America* deals, in two one-act plays, with contemporary characters who face situations beyond their control. The first, "Tone Clusters," presents the parents of an alleged murderer. Though such subject matter is Oates' frequent literary territory, the simplicity of this particular treatment gives her play a fresh immediacy. After a few minutes of viewing the piece, one wonders what is the greatest pleasure of such a text: the originality of its treatment, the gradual unfolding of the plot, the skill of dissecting the personality of seemingly innocent people or the question of who, if anyone, is innocent in compounding society's ills?

"I was trying to write about people who were caught off balance and had originally thought of this as a play for voices," Oates said. "As I worked on the script longer, I began to add more realistic elements, in particular the use of color slides to fill out the context of the two parents who speak from a bare stage."

Enthusiasm for life: The second act, "The Eclipse," also follows realistic conventions to portray a mother and her middle-aged daughter coping with loneliness. It's a surprisingly happy play. Both characters retain their enthusiasm for life—though it takes a while for the daughter, a professor and women's rights advocate, to appreciate her mother's interest in televised boxing.

Increasingly, Oates said, her dramatic work is influenced by visual aspects of staging and lighting. Several parts of both scripts called for the actors to perform in shadows, almost as if moving in a dream. Oates is presently working with the director Martin Scorsese in preparing her novel *You Must Remember This* for filming next year.



A woman's bass-fishing tourney is the setting for Joan Ackerman-Blount's *Zara Spook and Other Lures*.

Infinity's House, by Ellen McLaughlin, demanded the most of festival viewers. The script mixes three distinct events, with echoes of several others, into the course of a day on the American desert. With judicious pruning the play could become another *Our Town*—but as it played for the critics, about a third of the house did not return following the intermission.

The great strength of the play is its layering of characters and events to suggest difficulties of the American frontier as chronicled by new Western historians such as Patricia Limerick, Howard Lamar and Donald Worster. The old myths of the West as being a land of opportunity get potshot in this play as surely as the settlers die of thirst and madness.

Only the Indians retain their dignity, but the old chief who serves as a chorus to the unfolding tragedy comes across as a bearer of platitudes. And women are portrayed as unwilling victims of men who have no idea how hostile an environment the West can be.

Matisse in the pink: Demolishing idols must have been fun for Jane Anderson in preparing the 13 scenes that comprise *The Pink Studio*, a portrait of the modernist painter Henri Matisse, his family, drinking companion painter Andre Derain and a few other artistic characters.

"I think the play captured Matisse's visual and artistic appetite," commented Peter Morrin, director of the J.B. Speed Art Museum in Louisville, who has led a seminar on Matisse.

"The play may not have been quite right on the family life, however. Matisse and his wife separated, and she was later killed by the Nazis for her role in the French Resistance."

This year the Eastern European panel was as moving as the scheduled plays.

Matisse comes across as a bit of an egoist, a painter caught among the demands of studio, family, friends and a beautiful model. That he excels as a painter provides the

kernel of each vignette, as each scene suggests an incident that may have culminated in one of his paintings or collages, which is shown by slide at the end of the scene.

Zara Spook and Other Lures, the only outright comedy featured this year, plots the perils of big-league bass fishing. Its author, Joan Ackerman-Blount, lives in the Berkshire Mountains and runs a small theater, The Mixed Company, with friends in Great Barrington, Mass. She appreciates the strength, courage and spunk of women fishermen and writes about one of their fishing tournaments as being a period for women to enjoy life without the complicating factor of men. The comic element to the play, of course,

are the men who stumble into the fishing contest.

Strength of diversity: A balance of pieces, some more concerned with the process of performance and others with realistic social commentary, is one of the festival's great assets. What could be added to the mix to improve next year's offerings in part must come from the organization of the festival. One wonders, for instance, if the net could be cast wider for new plays. And more work from minorities both in acting and writing could be showcased.

Also, several plays seemed inflicted with a tone of condescension toward working- and middle-class people. For example, the son who has gone wrong in Oates' play is said to eat meat loaf with ketchup; has this fare contributed to his delinquency? If not, what has? The play is ambiguous on what has gone wrong. In much the same way, the fishing contestants in *Zara Spook and Other Lures* come across as a zany bunch of women who recognize that they often do better without men, but the fierce wit of the play quickly fades. Perhaps these characters seem elusive because they are thinly drawn; it is not clear where these women are coming from and why fishing is so important to them.

But how much a playwright can suggest about the variables of a life's history was demonstrated by *Vital Signs*, a collection of monologues presented by a playwright known as Jane Martin—allegedly a Kentuckian whom no one cares to identify further. *Vital Signs* was directed by Jory, who seemed to know exactly what the author had in mind. The pieces were flawless. Such a range of characters in a few minutes! Maybe Jane Martin will offer a full-length play next year to show all the resources of the contemporary theater, from a personal vision to a global viewpoint.

It is doubtful if another dramatic act from Eastern Europe will prompt a panel on theater and revolutions next year. But maybe by then a different region will be ready to take the world's stage. ■

Sandy Primm is a freelance writer on cultural and natural-resources issues in the Ozarks.

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Human rights

Continued from page 13

Guatemala, they were strengthening a quid-pro-quo network that could help shield any one of them from future condemnation. This mutual-protection pact was signed with the blood of tens of thousands of victims of state terror throughout the region.

The Latin American bloc was also able to trade its voting favors on other issues to garner support for a milder resolution. Eventually, the Europeans accepted a compromise that effectively kept Guatemala out of the most serious offender category, although it called for a more thorough investigation than in previous years.

In this case, the interests of Europe and the U.S. (which supported strong condemnation but did not expend much political capital in pushing for it) and the Latin American bloc directly clashed. This is not always the case, however. Alliances within the commission can shift as dramatically as the spring snow in the Alps.

In the commission's waning days, a seemingly innocuous resolution was introduced by Peru with the strong backing and, some would venture, the instigation of the U.S. Co-sponsored by Colombia and Afghanistan and supported by the Latin American bloc, the resolution linked "irregular armed groups" and "narco-traffickers" and called for a UNHRC report condemning both. Only Cuba and Sweden abstained from supporting this resolution, which was the culmination of a pattern of attacks on popular movements and insurgencies under the legitimating cover of anti-drug activities.

"Now that Communism can no longer be

used as the boogeyman it once was," said a representative of a Latin American insurgency movement, "the international villain is becoming narco-trafficking." In fact, although the narco/insurgency link sometimes exists, it is more often the elites and the governments of the grower countries that profit most from trafficking.

A Peruvian diplomat who helped draft the resolution acknowledged in private that its failure to mention the vital role of the elite sector was no accident. "You must recognize," he warned, "that there are common interests among the leaders of the Western Hemisphere that are not always the same as those of their citizens."

Millions of dollars later: To criticize the politicization of the UNHRC is naive. Nor should it come as a surprise that government spokespeople tend to promote elite interests. Although some diplomats and many NGO representatives are genuinely concerned about promoting human rights, others are more interested in personal advancement. "I noticed when I was training for diplomatic service," said a bright young U.S. representative quite unabashedly, "that no one was going into human rights, so I figured that as a good area in which to rise quickly."

Self-interest often combines with narrow national goals to produce a bizarrely limited view of the function of the commission and world politics in general. Thus, the North and South Koreans, the Turks and Greeks, the Iranians and Iraqis, for example, are locked together in private feuds and seem oblivious to the rest of the world. The blocs protect their own and, on a larger scale, both North and South sacrifice thousands on the

altar of political and economic expediency. The actual victims of endemic human-rights abuses can become pawns or tools for personal, national or regional aggrandizement.

Just how functional is the world body in light of these serious limitations? Could the money, resources and energy be better spent elsewhere? "We will never know," said one diplomat, "about the violations that didn't occur because of our actions, but certainly some lives are saved because their cause was raised here. And possibly some governments have mitigated the severity of their violations because of the forum's existence."

What is known is that the UNHRC has functioned since World War II to establish norms and set goals for the international community. The growing consensus on an

expanded definition of fundamental human rights can be linked to the existence of U.N. covenants and the efforts of the commission.

Last year the Soviet Union printed and distributed 40 million copies of the U.N. Covenant on Human Rights to its citizens. "That the U.S. is one of the few countries that still refuse to sign that covenant not only undercuts the power of the commission itself," said a European diplomat on condition that his name and country not be cited, "but also casts doubt on the commitment of the U.S. to see human rights as more than a mechanism for its own self-serving political gain."

Terry Allen is a freelance journalist based in Richmond, Vt. She attended the final five weeks of the recent UNHRC session in Geneva.

C A L E N D A R

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

CHICAGO

April 27-29

Racism and anti-Semitism is the focus of New Jewish Agenda's Midwest Regional Conference. Cornell West, Chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Princeton University, will speak Friday evening, 7:30 p.m., on "Black/Jewish Relations." FREE and open to the public. Panelists include: Jane Ramsey Saltzman, Director of Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, formerly of the Harold Washington administration; Ron Daniels, coordinator of the African American Progressive Action Network and former Executive Director of the Rainbow Coalition; Cheryl Harris, National Co-chair of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. \$45.00 for the weekend (including meals) and \$25.00 for Saturday only. Ecumenical Institute, 4750 N. Sheridan Road.

May 4

32nd Annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington Dinner—honoring Arthur Loevy, secretary treasurer, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Featured speaker, Cecil Roberts, vice president, United Mine Workers of America, AFL-CIO: "Victory over Pittston—Lessons for the Progressive and Labor Movements." At the Midland Hotel, 172 W. Adams, 6 p.m. Tickets \$35, \$60 with message in program book. Contact Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 384-0327.

May 5

"Building a DSA Agenda in the Heartland: A Conference on Organizing for the '90s." Sessions on '90s Internationalism, Socialist-Feminism and Reproductive Rights, and Building the DSA Agenda. Workshops on Racism, Electoral Work, Labor Support, Campus Organizing, National Health. Registration: \$15, \$10 for students. Venue: Ida Noyes Hall, University of Chicago, 9 a.m. Contact Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 384-0327.

July 13-14

Pledge of Resistance National Convention, July 13-14, 1990; Chicago (De Paul University). Participate in setting the political priorities, program and overall direction of the Pledge of Resistance for 1991. Learn from/share with Central American activists from around the country; participate in workshops; hear well-respected speakers; be prepared for some fun! Call (202) 328-4040 or write National Pledge of Resistance, P.O. Box 53411-3411, Washington, DC 20009-3411.

NEW YORK

May 4-11

THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL
FRIDAY, MAY 4—Joshua Freeman & Tim Schermerhorn; The Transit Workers Union, Then and Now; 7 p.m.; \$5.
SATURDAY, MAY 5—Karl Marx Born 1818; Juba (concert); 8 p.m.; \$5.
MONDAY, MAY 7—French Revolution 1968; Gerardo Renique; Peru: Drugs, Dirty War & Revolution (first of three lectures); 8 p.m.; \$5.
TUESDAY, MAY 8—Stephen Jay Gould; Contingency & Improbability in History; 5 p.m.; \$5.
THURSDAY, MAY 10—Pullman Strike Begins 1894; Bob Fitch, Frank Llewellyn & Utrice Leid; How Should the Left Relate to the Dinkins Administration?; 8 p.m.; \$5.

FRIDAY, MAY 11—The Birth of a New Generation (art opening); 6-10 p.m.; Free.

All events take place at the New York Marxist School, 79 Leonard St., New York, NY 10011, (212) 941-0332.

BURLINGAME, CA

May 4-6

LaborTECH—a coalition of organizers, journalists, video- and film-makers and computer experts interested in strengthening labor in the high-tech arena—is holding its first video and computer technology conference in Burlingame (15 miles south of San Francisco). The conference "LaborTECH, Communication Tools for the '90s" offers an exciting opportunity for trade union locals, district bodies, central bodies, individual trade unionists and labor activists to learn about the present and future uses of video, computers and other communication technology. Join inspirational organizers active in the labor movement, a variety of experts in high technology and seasoned journalists as they talk about the labor movement, what they've learned, how they've adapted and where we're going. Three days of workshops, panels and featured speakers are planned. For registration and information, send E Mail to PeaceNet account: LaborTECH, or write/call Labortech, 1511 Rollins Rd., Burlingame, CA 94010, (415) 697-8716.

LOVELAND, OH

May 11-12

"Women of Vision in the '90s." Enter into a multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural process to evoke your capacity as a woman to connect the inner sources of life with commitments to self, others, the world and the Mystery which is their context. Dr. Carolyn Gratten of the Institute for Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh will begin an experimental and reflective process. For information, write or call Audrey Sorrento, Grailville Programs, 932 O'Bannonville Rd., Loveland, OH 45140, (513) 683-2340.

MEDFORD, MA

June 4-9

Seventh Annual Management and Community Development Institute provides professional training for board, staff and volunteers of grass-roots organizations, human-service providers and community-development groups. Choose from 44 one-day and two-day courses covering: non-profit management, fundraising, community organizing and leadership development, community economic development, affordable housing, finance and community reinvestment. Learn with accomplished practitioners and experienced teachers from New England and across the United States. For more information contact: Lincoln Filene Center, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155, (617) 381-3549.

WICHITA, KS

June 22-24

Register now for Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Region II Biennial! For workshops and conversations with Mary Zepernick, president, U.S. Section WILPF; Sharon Asetoyer, Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, Lake Andes, S.D.; Jamala Rogers, National Black Women's Health Project; Maaskelah, African-American Community Organizer; Anna Spradlin, Specialist in Conflict Resolution; Ardelle Hough, WILPF Region II observer to Nicaraguan elections; Billie Knighton, WILPF Region II representative to U.S.-Soviet women's meetings in Moscow. Special Appearances by: "Jane Addams," aka "United States' most dangerous woman"; Josie Wallenius, guerrilla theater from Toronto, Canada, and more! Men are welcome too! To register, write: Melanie Shurden, Registrar, WILPF Region II Biennial, 5206 Pembroke Circle, Wichita, KS 67220, or call (316) 687-5866.

America, let's talk

"What shall we do with the Pentagon's billions, now that the Cold War is over?"

National Town Meeting: Wed., May 2, 1990

Moderator: Studs Terkel. Participants include George McGovern, former Senator, South Dakota; Hon. Claudine Schneider, (R-RI); Jesse Jackson, National Rainbow Coalition; Barry Commoner and other national leaders.

Broadcast Airs Live 9:30-11:30 P.M. Eastern Standard Time.

National Radio Coverage for May 2nd

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Atlanta, GA	WRFG	89.3 FM
Austin, TX	KAZI	88.7 FM
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Boston, MA	WGBH	89.7 FM
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Detroit, MI	WDET	101.9 FM
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Honolulu, HI	KIPO	89.3 FM
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Los Angeles, CA	KPFK	90.7 FM
Madison, WI	WORT	89.9 FM
Miami, FL	WDNA	88.9 FM
Minneapolis, MN	KFAI	90.3 FM
New York, NY	WBAI	99.5 FM
Olympia, WA	KAOS	89.3 FM
Orlando, FL	WWNZ	74 AM
Philadelphia, PA	WXPB	88.9 FM
Pittsburgh, PA	WDUQ	90.5 FM
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BRANDED

By Tom Engelhardt

AT THE FRONTIER OF ADVERTISING and publicity, the search for the unique product plug marches steadily forward. The annual April award ceremonies of the National Product Placement Association at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City offered its most prestigious symbol—the Molly—to three recent breakthroughs in the field.

In a statement issued to the press, retiring association President Harlan Simpson claimed each represented "a new vista in the placement of products, product trademarks or product slogans in non-ad environments" and hailed them as embodiments of the "creative energy with which our growing field renews and supports American life."

These advances in three newly developing areas of product placement seemed so revolutionary that *In These Times* put a research team to work exploring their ramifications in our lives.

The political plug: In a March 13 news conference, President George Bush, asked to confirm that he had returned a call to Iranian President Rafsanjani about American hostages in the Mideast, replied, "What's wrong with reaching out and touching someone when the hostages are at stake?"^{TMF}

While the press focused on the original Rafsanjani call—it was a hoax—the president's seemingly off-the-cuff reference to an AT&T ad slogan went unnoticed, except by Product Placement Agencies around the country. There, as Bush's signal to the ad community sank in, champagne corks began to pop.

Bush's first presidential product plug

was, it turns out, unpaid for. But a high-ranking Treasury Department official, involved in planning this nation's still-unannounced Office of Product Placement, said: "That's the last freebie the government's offering private industry. This time we tossed a jingle into the air to see if it would fly, but we're convinced product plugging's a viable non-tax method for raising funds."

"Look," he added, "the president's popularity's sky-high, and he's got to find new, Republican ways to put some money where his lips are. So what could be more perfect?" Placement rates will evidently range from \$1 million for "ordinary presidential display" to \$2 million-plus for DASE ("display at special events").

For the upcoming May summit, the ultimate "Presidential PlugOp," the going price will be \$5 million—if Gorbachov agrees to join in. (The Soviets would receive a 15 percent agenting fee.)

"Presidential spousal display" starts at \$500,000 and so on down through Cabinet ranks to William Bennett, the drug czar, who will reportedly have to do public service placements for next to nothing. "ITT, GM, all the acronyms, they're practically pounding down our doors," says our source. "But the bywords here are 'dignity' and 'taste.' No Japanese autos, no sanitary napkins, no kitty litter. I'm giving away no secrets if I tell you that next month the president will be handing out hamburgers and talking to minority kids in a Nashville

school cafeteria on the theme 'You deserve a break today.'"

Seventy-seven-year-old doyen of the plug industry James McMannus, director of A.C. Boyd Placement Co., Weehawken, N.J., bubbled with enthusiasm when reached by *In These Times*: "I thought I'd seen it all, but I haven't been off the phone in a week. No one, and I mean *no one*, wants to be left out. By the time we're done, they'll have to hold their next news conference in a football stadium to contain all the product!"

The scientific plug: "IBM announced yesterday," reported the April 5 *New York Times*, "that its scientists had spelled out the company's initials by dragging single atoms into the desired pattern on the surface of a crystal of nickel." The IBM atomic emblem was, the *Times* added, 660 billionths of an inch long and, in an accompanying photo, had been magnified about 6 million times.^{TMF} This image was, though the *Times* did not mention it, the smallest product plug ever to appear free on the cover of a magazine—the British scientific journal *Nature*.^{TMF}

Far more important, it is but one indication of unparalleled scientific advances to come based on the concept of corporate-image plugging. Already Dr. Gerald Franz, heading a team of scientists at General Electric's Edison Laboratories in Muskegon, Mich., is racing to drag individual electrons onto a silver surface to create a pattern 10 trillionths of an inch long that will flash

out "GE, 90 YEARS OF SERVICE."

Such plugs are by no means restricted to microscience. According to Nina Lamb, publisher of *BioPlacement Engineering*, a new industry newsletter due out this month, "When you combine recent transgenic work on skin pigmentation with the 1987 Patent Office ruling on the patentability of altered life, you have a potentially explosive placement phenomenon we've been calling 'BillBeasts.' I've put product everywhere, but I've never seen anything quite like this—the biggest European and American companies making deals with tiny biotech firms just to get a foot in the barn door. You see, animals may be the last empty message spaces left. Imagine, for instance, that you're out driving with the family. Suddenly you pass a farm and there's an army of genetically altered pigs lined up by the side of the road, their skin pigmentation spelling out 'Xerox!' Talk about impact! If this works, it could mean the revival of the family farm, because whatever corporations corner the patented-animal plug market will want to turn choice land, even major mall areas, back into farmland to get their messages across."

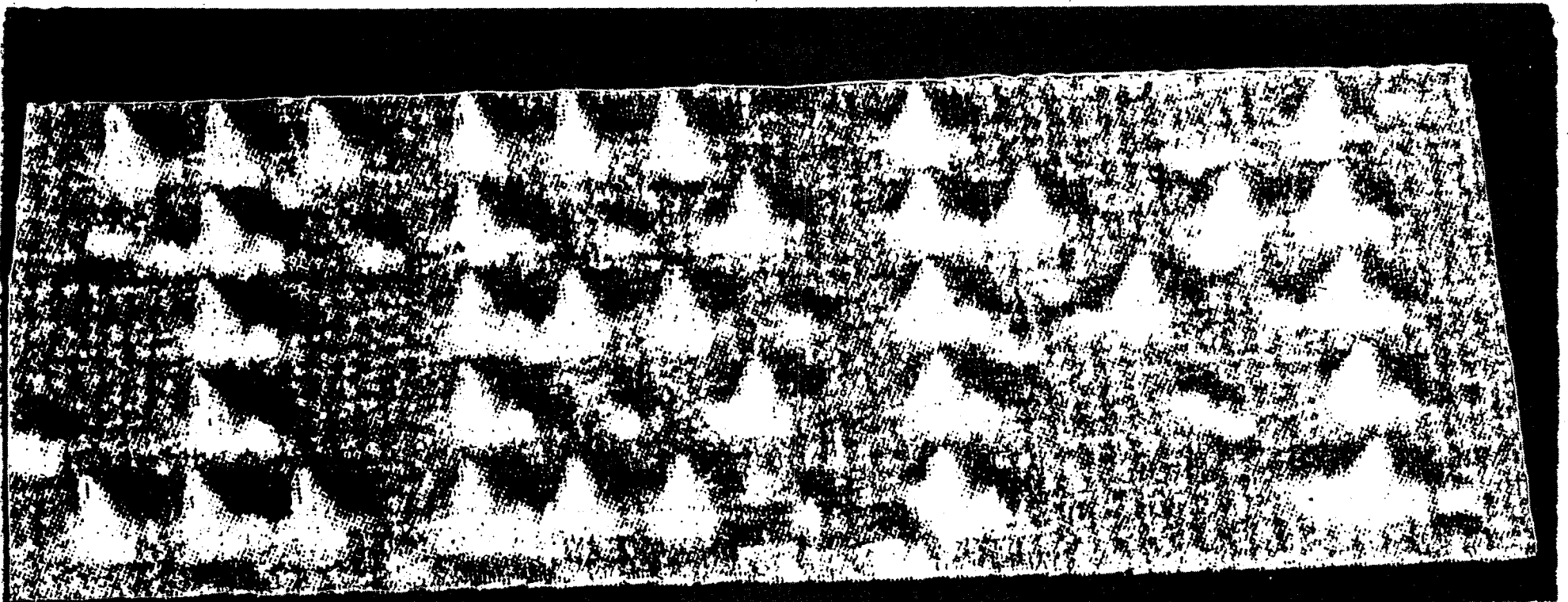
The domestic plug: A new toy recently displayed at New York's Toy Fair may represent product placement's most revolutionary advance. "Computer Warriors," an action-figure line for boys soon to be marketed by toy giant Mattel, includes 2½-inch Gridd, described in the Mattel catalogue as a "heroic mechanic specialist who is always thirsty for adventure ... [and] is concealed inside a realistic-looking Pepsi can that transforms into a battle base complete with his hyper hoverjet!"^{TMF}

According to Jay ("Bigfoot") Mathews, toy analyst for the Wall Street investment firm of Kidder, Cutter & Weiskopf, "This is the sort of thing that gets you into the Placement Hall of Fame because it goes far beyond even the free-plug concept. They're actually going to make parents pay to put a product plug in their own kid's room! Pay to install a Pepsi can permanently on their kid's desk! If this works, the sky's the limit in the domestic placement field. And, believe me, we're already sending out advisories to our customers to plug in their venture capital before the area gets too hot." ■

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Tom Engelhardt is a writer living in New York.

Scientists and politicians enter a brave new world of "plug opportunities."



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